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For the IRA – Against the British Army

THE IRA's Omagh action on August 20 provoked a sickening, if predictable, wave of chauvinism and hypocrisy through all sections of British society. The bosses' tabloids peddled their usual filth, with the 'quality' dailies adding their own, less sophisticated brand of imperialist venom.

Once again the British media wheeled out the limited vocabulary that it inflicts on us after an IRA operation: 'psychopaths', 'criminals' *ad nauseum* – as tedious as it is chauvinist. Britain's favourite 'Arab bogey', Colonel Gadaffi, was also brought out for the show, along with Czech explosives (the Czech authorities have promised to cooperate with the British authorities – what an act of treachery!)

The general line of the Fleet Street and Wapping hacks amounted to a demand for greater repression against the nationalist people of the occupied Six Counties. *Daily Star* editor Brian Hitchen, in a lead article on August 22, screeched that "the IRA must be smashed – wiped out for all time". The same editorial trumpeted the values of shoot-to-kill and a return to capital punishment for what it termed "ill-disciplined, revolutionary, Marxist butchers who pretend a phoney nationalism as their cause", a somewhat creative definition which Tom King used the following Wednesday. At least we now know the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's preferred reading material.

This approach is, of course, hardly intellectually rigorous. 'Rabid' seems too mild a word for this frenzied bigot. But when such hacks descend from their alcohol induced Valhalla to deal with the real world, aspects of the truth surface. Even the *Sun* had to admit that, rather than dealing with criminals, Britain was involved in a war. And, despite the bluster, the British bourgeoisie knows it has a very real fight on its hands, not just against however many hundred IRA and Inla Volunteers, but against the mass of Irish people who stand with them against Britain. British imperialism is at war with the Irish people.

It is a war that Britain cannot win and cannot afford to lose. The IRA is strong – as proven by its ability to withstand the repression of what we are often assured is the best trained army in the world – precisely because behind the IRA stands the Irish people.

Although British imperialism still retains the allegiance of the majority of British workers, its ideology is weak. It maintains, unconvincingly, the lie that the IRA are criminals. The IRA has mass support. The East Tyrone Brigade sustained the loss of eight leading Volunteers at the hands of an SAS murder gang in Loughgall last year and it will sustain the loss of Brian Mullen and Gerard and Martin Harte. It can do so because it has the backing of the nationalist people of that area, the same people who elected Bobby Sands to Westminster in 1981. They know who the criminals are.

The ridiculous assertion that the

IRA is hitting "soft targets" in the British Army in Britain, the Continent and the Six Counties is refuted by its own representatives, like Democrat leader, ex-Paratrooper and Irish War 'vet', Paddy Ashdown, or in the *Financial Times* of August 22, which quoted Sinn Féin publicity director, Danny Morrison, at length on the subject: "It is very difficult, if you are an IRA Volunteer, to attack these people when they are in full armour or wearing flack jackets or in jeeps or on patrol with fifty of their mates – so the IRA ends up attacking them when they are out of uniform and then of course they're criticised for being cowardly ... it's all propaganda."

Indeed. The British soldiers killed by East Tyrone Brigade IRA were not 'victims'. They were part of an occupying army – the real terrorists.

If imperialism's velvet glove is more than a little tatty, the mailed fist beneath does not suffer from metal fatigue. Imperialism will undoubtedly react with more terror against the Irish people. We may see more British troops on Irish streets, more raids, more detentions. The SAS have already been put on a looser leash against Irish nationalists, as has happened after other IRA successes in the past. Internment, of course, is being discussed by the British government. But the British ruling class has severe misgivings about its implementation. The *Daily Express* of August 22 warned on internment: "This two-edged weapon should remain in the armoury as a last resort – and only as a last resort." This has been the general reaction in the bourgeois press, at all levels of 'sophistication'.

An 'advantage' that the British state has that did not exist with internment in 1971 is that the London-Dublin Accord may provide the possibility of introducing internment in the Twenty-six Counties as well. But it is aware of the massive dangers of this. A stalemate can be retained, whatever the relative successes of the IRA, so long as the revolutionary situation can be confined to the Six Counties. But the generalisation of Six County style oppression throughout the country could well act as a channel for the flow of the revolution into the Twenty-six Counties.

The cross-border cooperation instituted by the Accord is sending ripples through the south, which is suffering the strains of a crisis ridden economy. If this is extended, then such repression is likely to draw the southern working class into struggle on these issues. This is something Charles Haughey and the Twenty-six County Irish bourgeoisie are aware of, but virtually impotent to do anything about. Any action they take to fend off the threat of the north may well rebound back on them. But its growing economic and political crisis narrows its room for manoeuvre. The south is being inexorably drawn towards the whirlpool of the revolutionary situation in the north. This opens up a whole new ball game, with rules not

at all to Britain's taste.

The *Express* hit the nail on the head. The whole of Britain's repressive apparatus is a double-edged sword. When internment was introduced in 1971, it stiffened the resistance of the Irish people, teaching important lessons on British 'democracy' and, not least, turning the Cages of Long Kesh into a university of the oppressed.

The imperialists and their stooges know that greater repression by the British state will meet with greater resistance from the Irish people. This was proven once more by the reaction of Irish republicans in Six Counties to the extradition of Robert Russell. The nationalist community in the Six Counties has learnt many lessons since 1971. These lessons could be generalised throughout the country. An indication of this is the yet untapped anger of many workers in the Twenty-six Counties at the handing over of Russell to a state which had dispensed 'justice' to the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four. Imperialism is in a 'no-win' situation.

Those, like the Time To Go! initiators on the Labour left, who believe that withdrawal is an option for imperialism are, to say the least, seriously mistaken. Those on the left, like *Militant*, who believe that "none of the reasons behind ... partition in Ireland in 1921 any longer apply" (August 26), and that, were it not for fears of a Protestant backlash and because of IRA resistance, Britain would reunite the country and leave, live in a fantasy land. This, an old argument of the CPGB, lends imperialism a progressive role relative to the IRA, whose actions, it is said, block national reunification.

There is no way that Britain can afford to withdraw. The consequences for imperialism would be very dangerous. It would be to admit defeat, to stand naked before the other imperialist robber barons. It would create serious splits within the ranks of the bourgeoisie, with many viewing the release of what is not merely Britain's oldest colony, but part of the British state, as tantamount to treachery.

The last time, prior to partition, Britain looked like it might even be thinking of leaving 'Ulster' in the lurch, it had to cope with virtual mutiny in the crown forces in the north, the raising of the Ulster Volunteers and schisms within the imperialist bourgeoisie. Imperialism is not about to let that happen again. It will try to keep the lid on the boiling pot of the Six Counties, at an "acceptable level of violence". Better the devil you know...

Withdrawal could lead to the detonation of the Irish powderkeg, rather than its defusion. And it does not take a great deal of imagination to guess what kind of reaction this would create among workers in Britain. Ireland is a vital crutch for the ailing British imperialism. It has no intention of abandoning it.

It is the duty of the working class in Britain to kick the crutch away. In this struggle, it is necessary for

communists in Britain to make common cause with the Irish people and the IRA against British imperialism. That is why we say, 'For the IRA – Against the British Army!'

What exactly are the implications of such a stand? They are certainly an absolute rejection of the chauvinist stand of the cadaverous Communist Party of Britain sect and the *Morning Star*, paraded as 'communist'. These cowards fear the struggle in Ireland every bit as much as their more successful bourgeois cousins in the newspaper publishing business. The liberal cringing of the *Morning Star* editorial on August 22 was akin to that of the *Independent* or *Guardian*, if far more poorly written. It sets itself up as the liberal conscience of the imperialist bourgeoisie, whom it instructs: "Bringing back internment would not make the situation in Ireland go away. Demanding internment is an emotional response to what is a political question ... internment would solve nothing. It would certainly not stop the military campaign of the Provisional IRA", which the *Morning Star* would like to see terminated every bit as much as its *Daily* namesake.

The *Morning Star's* attitude is not to take a stand against imperialism and with the Irish people. It wants to convince the British bourgeoisie that it is handling the 'troublesome Irish' in entirely the wrong way. The problem, you see, is that imperialism is too "emotional". The *Star* wants "a new [sic!] political approach, which will involve a British declaration of intent to withdraw from Ireland and to smooth the path toward peaceful reunification." In other words, the most shopworn, bankrupt reformist view of the Irish War imaginable. To advocate a "peaceful [read reformist] transition" to a Thirty-two County 'Free State', as the *Star* does, is a prostration before the reactionary Irish bourgeoisie and its British imperialist mentors. Such a situation gives the clearest indication of the pro-imperialist results of reformism.

Sadly, much of the revolutionary left in Britain provides only apologism as an alternative; an alternative which is ultimately pro-imperialist. For instance, groups such as the SWP or the Spartacist League will, in general, defend IRA attacks on military targets. But, if for some reason, a planned action of this kind misfires, the IRA meets with outrage from these political fleas nipping at its ankles. From carrying out a war against British imperialism, it suddenly becomes a collection of "individual terrorists" and, monstrously, some abstract, non-denominational working class is called on to defend itself "against Orange and Green terror" (a favourite of the Spartacist League), thus equating the forces of revolution with the forces of counterrevolution.

For these pseudo-Marxist wiseacres, support or condemnation for the armed struggle does not rest on the political orientation, principles or strategy of the IRA. It

does not rest even on the intentions behind a particular action, taken out of context from the struggle as a whole. If the bomb which killed the eight soldiers had been detonated too late or too early, and had instead killed eight civilians, it would have met with condemnation from these so-called internationalists. So taking sides in the Irish War becomes not a matter of political principles, of taking a stand with the forces of national liberation in their struggle as a whole, but of accident. Is it not surprising that the British left has no such qualms in refraining from criticising such acts of 'individual terrorism' in South Africa, Palestine, etc? The smell of blood, it seems, dissipates over a distance.

Socialist Worker of August 27 advocates "support for the right of the IRA to fight back at the army that occupies the Catholic ghettos." Fair enough, though this is not extended to IRA actions, in general. It then states "the killing of troops ... will not rid Northern Ireland of the bigotry, poverty and repression it suffers today. Only socialism can do that." Aren't you glad we have the SWP to enlighten us on this? Again, if we were to be charitable, we could say 'fair enough'. But the fact is that not even the IRA argues that 'stiffing Brits' is the answer to all Ireland's ills. The armed struggle merely plays a part.

The ducking and weaving of much of the revolutionary left in Britain is an apology for support. As we have seen, it has more get-out clauses, more dishonest 'small-type', than the contracts of the most corrupt of second-hand car salesmen. *Socialist Worker's* 'support' for the struggle of the Irish people is not worth the thirty pence it costs you to read it.

The proof of the pudding, here, is in the eating. The SWP and the bulk of the British left are exposed time and time again as charlatans when their 'support' is tested in practice. This is where the small type comes in. The active solidarity with the struggle in Ireland is pitiful. On the rare occasions that the SWP has a contingent on Irish marches, they mobilise only a small fraction of its claimed membership, with no attempt to build support for the action in the working class.

Such a situation is the rule rather than the exception within the workers' movement. The Trotskyist entryists who staff the Labour Committee on Ireland prefer to deal with the working class through the media of reformists, and implicit pro-imperialists, like Livingstone, Short and Hain. To be able to do this, of course, you must cut your cloth to suit these Labourite dignitaries. Anti-imperialism is therefore dumped in favour of impotent humanitarianism.

But the challenge must be built. And it will be. This can only be done by taking an unequivocal stand with the forces of national liberation in Ireland. The Irish War allows no neutrals.

Take sides – for the IRA, against the British Army!

Alan Merri



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

SEPTEMBER'S edition of *Marxism Today* contains the full text of *Facing up to the future*, the Communist Party of Great Britain's draft, draft for a new edition of its programme the *British Road to Socialism* which will be finalised at its congress in November 1989. It must be said that it is a thoroughly liberal document.

The programme of a genuine Communist Party is the crystallisation of its strategy and main tactics. It is a guide to action in the struggle for the overthrow of existing society, serving the proletarian vanguard for a whole historical period ie from now to the point of revolution.

This has never been the case with any of the editions of the *BRS*. By its very nature it has often been little more than an albatross around the necks of the CPGB leaders.

The part time general secretary of the newly formed Communist Party of Britain, Mike Hicks, says that *Facing up to the future* represents the "final abandonment" of "Marxist-Leninist principles" by the CPGB. It did this many decades ago. (Mind you Mike Hicks said that the CPGB "finally abandoned the principles of Marxism-Leninism" at its last congress in 1987. How one can "finally abandon" something twice is a problem we will leave with Mike Hicks).

The fact is that none of the five editions of the *BRS* — let alone the last edition on which the CPB bases itself — had anything to do with Marxism-Leninism. They were imbued with a reformist world outlook. More than that they had nothing to do with guiding practice.

The 1968 edition, for example, contained the unconditional demand for Britain to withdraw from Ireland. It pledged support for the struggle to reunify Ireland. The explosion of a revolutionary situation in the Six Counties did not see the leaders of the CPGB — which included people who are today at the head of the CPB — turn to their programmatic position. Far from it.

They closed their eyes to what was in the *BRS* and instead called upon the British imperialists to first solve the problem of sectarianism. Only then would it be possible for Britain to withdraw they claimed. The fact that this edition of the *BRS* remained the 'official' edition until 1978 proved somewhat embarrassing.

The *BRS* has always been more like a reformist election manifesto. It has none of the longevity of a Marxist-Leninist programme and like all opportunist documents it is extraordinarily vulnerable to what are in world historical terms quite minor events.

When Britain had a general election in 1979 and Thatcher's Tories gained a majority the CPGB leadership found its *BRS* — which was based on the facile assumption that the country would see nothing but a series of lefter and ever lefter Labour governments — stood merely as a monument to their stupidity. We predict the same fate for the new edition of their *BRS*.

Facing up to the future represents a further step to the right for the CPGB. Its right Eurocommunist faction around *Marxism Today* which wrote it wants to break from any pretence to have anything to do with working class politics.

If they win the CPGB — which was the highest organisational achievement of the working class in Britain when it was formed in July 1920 — will be nothing more than a neo-Fabian rump.

We will not mourn, we will organise the struggle to again equip the working class in this country with a genuine Communist Party. That is a task to which *The Leninist* is dedicated.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Yes to Gorbachev

With the publication of the article 'No to Gorbachevism', (Jack Conrad, *The Leninist* No.66) all uncertainty has been removed about where the Leninists of the CPGB stand on the cardinal question of political developments in the USSR.

In the light of this article it is superfluous for me to give my own assessment of the 19th All Union Conference of the CPSU. *The Leninist* is evidently set on a course of irrevocable doctrinaire hostility to the CPSU, a party it now openly denounces as a bureaucratic party of the working class. The article? (Attempts to deal analytically with the documents of the conference. Indeed the reader must wonder whether the author has even taken the trouble to study them. Instead of criticism the comrade serves up a political denunciation of the general secretary, accusing him of being a 'revisionist', a 'representative of what is old, decaying and reactionary.' This is not principled criticism but abuse. Pseudo-scientific, pseudo Leninist trash of this kind is unworthy of a communist. The article confirms my suspicions. The time for debate is over.

A few of the mistakes in the article are dealt with easily. First, the author is surely being disingenuous when he uses the bourgeois media's praise as a weapon against perestroika? Yes, we must worry when our enemies praise us. But first it is necessary to analyse the enemy's 'praise', to examine whether it is genuine or reflects a deeper strategy. The comrade must surely understand that the enemy's apparent enthusiasm for perestroika is by no means a genuine or considered response.

Bourgeois politicians, like their media, are at a loss to understand the significance and potential of perestroika. Their conditional praise is no more than a cover, a tactic of 'wait and see' to be adopted while their precious 'Sovietologists' catch up with life: life which has shown their comfortable array of preconceptions and assumptions to be worthless. In the case of Mrs Thatcher and her Fleet Street acolytes, the 'praise' she bestows on the general secretary is a thinly veiled attempt to make domestic political capital by implying, ludicrously, that she has somehow converted him to democracy! So much for the 'love' which the comrade says the bourgeoisie and its hangers on have for comrade Gorbachev.

Secondly, on some points of detail:

a) The comrade's reference to the creation of a "Duma-like parliament" is a dishonest travesty of the projected Congress of People's Deputies, a cheap rubbishing of the complex of political reforms outlined in the general secretary's report to the conference.

b) When the comrade talks of "two carefully chosen candidates instead of one", he is either guilty of a mistake or a lie. The appropriate section of the general secretary's report states that "the process by which the Soviets are formed is to ensure the right to nominate an unlimited number of candidates and to discuss them broadly and openly and the opportunity to recall delegates" (my italics).

I am not going to indulge in the comrade's favoured tactic of denunciation. However, I must say that his views give rise to questions about his political judgement, even

his political honesty. Again and again I tell him that defeat or sabotaging of perestroika will lead not to his phantom working class insurrection, but to a swift and efficient repression — by those forces for whom perestroika spells the end of a life of privilege, unearned power and prestige. Stripped of its Leninist language (of which the comrade has a fluent command) the latter half of his article is a call to the Soviet working class to engage in subversion. This must make us question his apparent principledness and his political maturity.

If this letter appears indignant, it is not indignant on my own account, but on behalf of the millions of communists in the USSR in whom the comrade is not prepared to place any comradely trust, the millions of communists to whose work he is content to dismiss with facile slogans and pseudo-scientific rhetoric.

MG Malkin
Surrey

Revolutionary purity

Unfortunately standing on ones' revolutionary purity on the question of Ireland and declaring 'The One True Correct Slogan or Nothing!' can be as much a cop-out as trying to find the path of least resistance. I don't know what Alan Merrik's experience in the working class movement (as opposed to the movement of city left milieu) is on this matter, but if its anything like my own he will know this is not the time to be preaching 'the one true gospel'.

The fact is that there is a terrible silence on Ireland. There is no debate on Ireland. The assumptions of the ruling class go unchallenged and are absorbed as straight fact. They are all too common currency among the bulk of the working class including trade union activists.

A new initiative needs to be taken. The question must be used to accelerate the discussion, to broaden it, to take the question of the so-called 'Irish' war back to Britain and fix it in the British class struggle. But that means getting your hands dirty in among the debates and the initiatives where they are happening.

I think you need to look at the question strategically from the point of view of the Irish side of the struggle. It is directly in their interests to create a climate of opinion in which masses of people in Britain are demanding the troops out; and obviously they will be doing it for a variety of reasons — some less 'pure' or 'correct' than others. But the greater that movement, the greater the opportunity to draw out the internationalist significance of the struggle in Ireland.

I personally think we missed a great opportunity with the old Troops Out Movement. The process of 'Only the Correct Reasons or None at All' started then and continued into the so-called new TOM, until the soldiers' wife or mother who simply did not want her loved one to die and wished him to stop at home or come home, was almost told to bugger off. This is not a 'good' enough reason to want the troops out.

The demand from all quarters, many on humanitarian grounds, many on religious grounds, on selfish 'don't kill my boy' grounds, will all be part of a growing movement in which the working class must

intervene with a clear perspective of support for the liberation struggle and a wish to defeat imperialism abroad, so much the better to defeat it at home.

In abstract I do not disagree with Merrik; in practice it smacks of lofty, self-serving preaching in a corner. The Time to Go! campaign sounds wet and 'jolly liberal'; but for god's sake there is bugger all else being done, and none of the people with all the correct answers have so far made any inroads into working class opinion on the matter.

David Douglass
Hatfield Main NUM Branch delegate

Benefit Social

We would be pleased if you could publish details of a benefit social organised by Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid on behalf of IRSP prisoners. The social will be held on Friday, September 9 at the Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 (nearest tube Finsbury Park). Music is provided by Finnegan's Wake and the bar will be open until 12am. Admission is £3 and £1.50 concessions and a raffle for prisoners crafts will be held. All proceeds will go to IRSP prisoners.

James O'Brien
London

Ireland's 'Iskra'

I have just finished reading for the first time the IRSP's *Starry Plough* (No.3) and was to say the least very impressed by its political orientation and level of Marxist analysis concerning Ireland.

The IRSP are in no doubt whatsoever that their 'own' bourgeoisie are utterly incapable of carrying out a purely national democratic revolution since they are a "collaborating bourgeoisie whose interests are completely tied to those of British imperialism" (p1).

Irish self-determination can only be achieved through proletarian socialist revolution. The IRSP must forge the revolutionary vanguard party which is vitally necessary in order to make this a reality.

The international revolutionary left has a duty to support the IRSP's struggle in building this vanguard party. Everyone who claims to support the oppressed against imperialism should read Ireland's *Iskra*.

Clive Lewis
Herts

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Fight for Irish Freedom

British workers – for that matter, British communists – must be won to take up the issue of Irish freedom in practice. To put it mildly, there is still much to be done

ALL TOO often we find the fight for Ireland's freedom evaded by those who call themselves communists. In contrast *The Leninist* has always emphasised the need to put the Irish war to the top of the agenda of politics in Britain.

Many who run round on such causes as 'peace', trade union issues or South Africa scuttle for cover when Irish freedom rears its balaclava-covered head. Then there is always 'something else' to do.

Rather than indicating the subsidiary importance of Ireland within the working class, this indicates that it cuts to the core; far too close to the bone for many British 'r-r-revolutionaries'. Fighting this cowardice and thinly veiled chauvinism is central to the forging of a genuine Communist Party in Britain.

Marx and Engels well understood the role which Britain's oppression of Ireland had on the British working class. It divided British from Irish worker, creating a false identity of interest between the British workers and their bourgeoisie. It was the keystone of British imperialism. But it was also the key to the British revolution. "Ireland's emancipation", wrote Marx, "is the first condition of the emancipation of the British workers." The Irish revolution would fire the British class struggle. British workers had to be won to side with the struggle for Irish freedom, whether waged by the Fenians in Marx's day or, in our's, by the IRA and Inla.

The Communist International stated that the British socialist who failed to support by every available means the uprisings in Ireland deserved to be branded with infamy, if not a bullet.

We have taken this to heart. *The Leninist* has always fought for active solidarity with the Irish revolution, to the utmost of our ability. We have always exposed those who, while calling themselves 'socialist' or 'communist', fall short of fulfilling, or betray, this task.

The Irish Freedom Movement's anti-internment demonstration of August 6 provided an excellent opportunity for us to mobilise such solidarity around our banners and slogans; a test of our own organisation and supporters, as it was of many organisations of the British left.

This was of special importance in the light of the preceding week's activities of the IRA: the Mill Hill bombing along with a similar attack in Dusseldorf, the ambush of a UDR patrol, and the killings of

UDR, RUC men and of two collaborating building contractors. This led to condemnations from Tory and Labour parties alike, with demands for the reintroduction of the death penalty for Irish freedom fighters, internment and even the banning of the IFM march. It was also rumoured that the march might be attacked by fascists.

The reaction of much of the left was as predictable as it was chauvinist. The *Morning Star* declared the day after the Mill Hill bombing, August 2, that "expressions of condemnation of the dead-end military campaign of the IRA are not enough." What a cowardly betrayal of the right of the Irish people to take up arms against their oppressors! How a group of CPBers had the cheek to show up on the march to try and pounce a few sales of this reactionary rag from the demonstrators is something that any member of that sect with an ounce of principle ought to ponder on most carefully.

The promised fascist attack did materialise. Groups of these fine examples of the purity of the Aryan race (beer-guts an' all) harassed the march along the route and at the rally. Our contingent was attacked, but this assault was easily rebuffed by Leninist comrades.

Surprising, then, that the IFM/RCP stewards should react in a rather panicky fashion, bunching the marchers together (an easier target for projectiles) and hurrying the marchers along the route. At times the march resembled more of a 'fun run for Irish freedom', with demonstrators literally jogging through the streets in compliance with the stewards' instructions.

We cannot help feeling that this approach was not only wrong, but also tinged with more than a little sectarianism. *The Leninist* had behind its banners a 60 strong contingent, the second largest contingent on the march, next to that of the IFM/RCP. This brought it undue attention from the IFM/RCP stewards, who attempted to bunch our contingent into as small an area as possible, ostensibly to resist fascist attack. They even tried at the end of the march to drown our slogans, particularly "For the IRA – Against the British Army!", and "Britain's Defeat – Our Victory!", which they seemed to find not quite to their taste.

Along the route we also found IFM posters carefully covering ours – calling for support for the demonstration. Our team had been out the night before and in spite of denials by leading RCP members that "we don't do such things", we

cannot for the life of us figure out who else would. It seems that the RCP/IFM have decided to censor *The Leninist*.

The RCP's paper, *the next step*, reports extensively on the march and rally. However, it omits one speaker, the comrade who addressed the rally on behalf of *The Leninist*. It can hardly be because we were too small to merit consideration. Rather, like the obliteration of our posters and the attempts to shout down our slogans, it seems to be a cynical attempt at censorship of an organisation whose hot breath the RCP is beginning to feel on the back of its neck. It is a sign of its weakness, rather than strength.

Having said this, our own turnout is not as we would have liked. Although we were the most militant and second largest contingent on the march the majority were not actually directly mobilised by *The Leninist* for the day. Rather, they were Irish youth who were drawn to our banners through our comrades' energy, militancy and slogans. Many comrades who identify themselves with us were for one reason or another unavailable on the day. They should be ashamed that demonstrating against British imperialism in Britain should be left to Irish youth.

This situation must be changed. British workers – for that matter, British communists – must be won to take up the issue of Irish freedom in practice. To put it mildly, there is still much to be done.

We must energetically and unceasingly challenge the identification of the British working class with British imperialism. As we argued in the last edition of *The Leninist*, one facet of this is to challenge the reformist illusions on which the Time To Go! charter is based, putting forward a genuinely anti-imperialist and revolutionary alternative, calling for troops out of Ireland now. We raised this in the last issue, and in our address to the IFM rally. We have plans to translate this anti-imperialist theory into anti-imperialist action. Specifically we have called upon all left groups in Britain to join us in building an anti-imperialist contingent on next year's Time To Go! demonstration.

Are you a communist, an anti-imperialist? Do you want Irish freedom? Then fight with *The Leninist* for troops out now, because the time to fight is now!

Alan Merrik

Members of the Union of Communication Workers, the union of Post Office workers, voted two to one, in favour of industrial action. The will to fight is clearly there. However, the wording of the ballot gives the union leaders control over the form of action. The initiative lies with general secretary Alan Tuffin and the executive. They would like to keep things to one day protests. Given the past wheeler-dealing of Tuffin and the UCW bureaucrats, this should be viewed with some trepidation. In the last deal with the PO, new postal recruits had their rises negotiated away by the UCW leaders. There is no way anyone could describe Tuffin as a class fighter. UCW militants must keep a close eye on their leaders; no bargaining with workers' rights behind closed doors. In fact, unless they are to be used as bargaining chips by the bureaucrats, they must organise at a rank and file level. This is something that not only the past disputes of the UCW have taught, but all industrial disputes during this period. Wapping went down to a demoralised defeat because of the absence of a political platform and national rank and file organisation independent of the bureaucrats. You can see the same happening with the P&O dispute. Control of any UCW action, if it is not to go the same way, must rest with the rank and file.

The Justice For Kitson Campaign

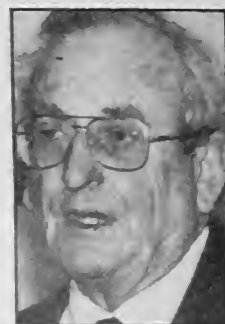
has recently published a pamphlet stating David Kitson's case and calling for an end to his victimisation. Kitson served 20 years in apartheid's jails for his role in the leadership of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, and his stand as a principled communist. On his release he was promised funding by Tass (now part of MSF) to lecture at Ruskin College. But, because he refused to denounce active City of London AA which had vigorously campaigned for him, he was cast aside by *Morning Star* supporter Ken Gill and the Tass leadership, his funding withdrawn and a whispering campaign against him begun. No one should stand idly by while a principled class fighter like Kitson is slandered and victimised. The campaign is putting out draft resolutions to organisations in the workers' and solidarity movements, urging support for his case. Plans are being made to send a delegation to the ANC in Lusaka. A fund is also being established to sustain Kitson and others like him, who have been prepared to sacrifice everything in the struggle to smash apartheid. We urge all our readers to support this campaign and to raise it in the workers' movement.

The resurgence of healthworkers' action over the recent period shows that the NHS dispute is far from over. Many rank and file workers are clearly disgusted at the sop that the Tories are offering higher nursing grades, to undermine the living standards of lower grade workers and foster divisions within the healthworkers' ranks. There has already been strike action in a number of areas. Healthworkers have not been defeated. But they have been badly led. Not only by the non-strike, non-TUC RCN but by the 'militant' Cohse and Nupe. Activists must be careful to guard against channelling workers' anger through the bureaucracy. Unfortunately while cross area and cross union links have been forged this has been left to spontaneity. Thanks to the SWP in particular, attempts to form a rank and file movement among health workers came to naught. This is something militant healthworkers will not forget. For without an alternative organisation the union bureaucracy are bound to lead the struggle into another cul-de-sac, just as they have done in previous years. The bureaucracy is incapable and unwilling to lead effectively. Neither should workers dance to the bureaucrats' tune by entering into fruitless and divisive union piracy. We say: learn the lessons of February and March: link up all who want to fight on a cross union basis through rank and file strike committees.

Don't let us down!



Our £600 monthly fund was again down badly in August (as it was in July). Only £212 came in. This is a serious shortfall and was one of the reasons we decided not to publish in August. It is absolutely essential that over the rest of the year we have surpluses. Only in this way can we pay our printing and typesetting bills. We therefore earnestly call upon our readers to come to our aid. If you already donate to our paper redouble your efforts. If you consider yourself sympathetic to the aims of our paper and you have not got round to sending in a regular donation, now is the time to do it. Comrades we need your money and we need it now. It is vital that no one takes *The Leninist* for granted. It keeps going because of the self sacrifice and determination of our supporters and readers.



•Raising the case of David Kitson in the workers' movement is an important question for all militants

An important achievement: important task



Theory into practice

The Fifth Summer Offensive of 'The Leninist' has now drawn to a triumphant close. Our successful campaign reveals many lessons for our organisation, not simply about the technicalities of fund raising, but also about the struggle for a genuine Communist Party itself

FOR TWO months out of every year, *The Leninist* organisation conducts a intensive period of fund raising known as the Summer Offensive. During this two month campaign, comrades are set a minimum target to raise. Many participants however, set themselves goals far in excess of this minimum.

Our Fifth Summer Offensive, the largest and most intensive that our organisation has ever staged, has now drawn to a triumphant close with £10,473.09 raised by participants in the course of the eight weeks. Looking back over this Offensive, we can see that it not only provides us with lessons on the technicalities of conducting fund raising drives; crucially, it also teaches us much about the struggle for a genuine Communist Party itself.

Impressive reading

Before we look at the place of the Summer Offensive in the theory and practice of *The Leninist*, it is worthwhile scrutinising some of

the statistics of the campaign. They make for impressive reading.

In the previous articles on this year's Summer Offensive, we have looked at some of the logistics of the campaign and compared them with the dismal show of the opportunist rumps in the communist movement, the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of Britain (for some 'strange' reason the New Communist Party does not need to conduct a fund drive – any guesses why?). We will not bore comrades by going over all of them again, but there are a few that bring out particular well the campaign's successful features.

The Leninist has no overseas subsidiser. No socialist government buys up half our print run. Therefore we have to fight for finance, we have to organise an *offensive* to achieve what we need. The opportunists of the CPGB and CPB have their organisations and publications heavily subsidised as a result of political prostitution. Because of this they merely have to *appeal* for donations from their supporters in

order to top up their bank balance.

Opportunism provides an easy life. But it produces political flab and laziness. The Leninist road is a hard and difficult one, but it produces immense political strength. Because of this we raised over £10,000 during this Summer Offensive and for an organisation of our size, that has been a tremendous achievement. In contrast, the still born right centrist CPB had a target for its development fund of £25,000. The CPB claims a membership of 1,500 plus! Or in other words, the members of the CPB are being asked to commit just over £16 each to help develop their 'party' (in fact only £24,506 was raised).

Obviously, we will be overtaking these has been over the next few years. Certainly if our organisation was of the same size as the CPB we would be aiming to raise something of the order of £34 million.

Similarly, the burnt out shell of the Eurocommunist CPGB is equally incapable of generating any degree of dedication from its members. For example, this year's Summer Appeal of the CPGB was abysmal. The CPGB leadership retreated from the 1987 target of £100,000 which was badly under achieved and set the organisation a total of £80,000 to raise. In fact, just over £57,000 was scabbled together, or in other words a 30% shortfall.

On the first day of our campaign, we raised £1,255 at our Summer Offensive launch meeting in central London. This is actually larger than the total that seven whole CPGB districts managed to raise for their party's appeal.

We are particularly proud to note that all those Leninist sympathisers who took part only in a limited way, were as individuals actually raising more than three whole districts of the Euro CPGB.

This year, as in previous years, such high levels of commitment has acted to purge our ranks, but not in exactly the same way as with the first four offensives. We will look at this phenomenon later.

The future

Many times in the pages of our paper, we have claimed that *The Leninist* represents the future of communism in Britain. What do we mean by this?

If we look at organisations that also claim the mantle of communism in this country, but in particular groups like the CPGB or its right centrist doppelganger, the CPB, it is easy to get into an attitude that dismisses them too glibly and thus misunderstands their essential nature. Organisation flows from politics. Organisation is the form of mediation between theory and practice. Therefore, the opportunist groups are the *organised form* of the ideological crisis that has paralysed the working class vanguard in this country.

A communist organisation like *The Leninist* represents a conscious step towards overcoming this crisis, a conscious step in the fight for communism. It is in this light that we see the true significance of our Summer Offensives and in particular, the outstanding results of this year, as they represent important *political* achievements, not simply technical/financial ones.

The fight for communism demands taking conscious steps that will lead to it. We must be aware that in contemporary capitalist society individual freedom can only be corrupt and corrupting because it is based on the unfreedom of others. Communists therefore do not search for their individual salvation under capitalism but consciously subordinate themselves to the collective that will bring real freedom ie communist society. The nucleus of that collective is *The Leninist*. And like every dialectical process it contains the seeds, admittedly in a primitive, abstract and undeveloped form, of the goal it is destined to achieve, what Lukacs called "freedom in solidarity." (*History and Class Consciousness*, p317)

Our organisation, as a revolutionary communist group, is sharply differentiated from bourgeois or opportunist political tendencies by the qualitatively higher demands it places on its members and supporters. This tough approach does no flow from some perverse desire on the part of Leninist organisers to ruin our supporters' social lives. Our approach is a product of the tasks we set: as revolutionaries our business is about overthrowing society as it currently exists; bourgeois parties and even reformists at the end of the day, are concerned with *defending* what already exists, ie capitalism.

It is infinitely harder to overthrow capitalism than it is to defend it. The ideas of the bourgeoisie are constantly reproduced by

social existence. As Marx pointed out, in any given period the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Thus, to be a Leninist, a Marxist, one must learn to constantly swim against the tide of the ideas, attitudes and norms that dominate ones' social environment.

So rather than swimming with the tide, a communist is someone who *consciously* fights to overthrow bourgeois society and *consciously* takes the necessary steps that will lead to communism. This is a basic definition of a communist.

Now, like any political organisation, *The Leninist* has a relatively large number of sympathisers in its periphery. These comrades, while they may contribute financially and complete work for us, hold back from a full scale commitment. "I agree with everything you say," they assure us, "*but...*". The "*but*" qualification is normally followed by an excuse along the lines of "I have no time with my work/union responsibilities/family commitments" etc, etc.

We do not doubt the sincerity of comrades like this; but we say frankly to them that they *cannot* agree with everything we say – and centrally they *cannot* agree with our fight for a genuine Communist Party – if they are not prepared to subordinate themselves to the discipline of our organisation.

Lenin's Bolshevik Party demanded the active commitment from its members. The split with the Mensheviks at the 1903 Congress of the RSDLP hinged precisely on the question of the level of dedication to the Party that was required to be a member.

The grouping that went into the history books as the Bolsheviks, coalesced at this congress during the argument over the statute that prescribed the requirements of membership of the Party. Whereas the Mensheviks pushed the notion that simple acceptance of the programme should be sufficient, Lenin's 'hards' insisted that membership *must* be synonymous with personal active participation in the Party's revolutionary struggle.

History proved whose approach was correct. The revolution was a brilliant confirmation of Lenin's single minded fight for the Party.

The foundations for the Party that made the October Revolution possible were laid down in 1903. But that was not the end of the story. It was built in battles big and small. The Party was built through bitter struggles against ideological deviations like Menshevism and Bogdanovism but it was also, crucially, constructed in the day-to-day work of Party members, selling the paper, dodging the secret police and raising finance.

A Communist Party as a revolutionary form of consciousness of the proletariat is a *process by its very nature*. It comes into being as the product of struggle. It is built in the course of battles in *the here and now*. It does not, as some might like to think fully armed and ready for war when the trumpet of revolution sounds forth. A genuine Communist Party must be fought for, every single agonising step of the way, fought for with the comrades and resources we have *now*.

And an absolutely vital 'moment' in our fight for a mass, revolutionary Communist Party, the one that probably more than any other reveals itself as the embryo of what our organisation will become in the future, is our annual Summer Offensive.

Sobbotnick

In the pages of Lenin's collected works, we have found a few obscure references to Summer Offensive type campaigns that the Bolsheviks ran around their paper, campaigns that continued into the 1920s. But the parallel we have found most material on that is pertinent to our Summer Offensive is the communist subbotniks.

The subbotniks were initiated in Moscow by the communist workers of the Moscow-Kazan railway. On Saturday, May 10 1919, at 6pm, "*the communists and sympathisers turned up to work like soldiers, formed ranks, and without fuss or bustle were taken by the foreman to the various jobs.*" As well as doing unpaid work on this 'Communist Saturday' these desperately poor and badly fed proletarians did several hours of voluntary unpaid labour after the ordinary working day.

These communist militants initiated the "subbotniks" in response to an appeal by the Soviet government for workers in the rear to match the heroic sacrifices of the Red Army in its fight against counterrevolution. Lenin attached enormous significance to these manifestations of what he called "*a victory over*

our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism". He saw in them the "*shoots of communism*" because such communist labour "*is labour performed gratis for the benefit of society, labour performed not as a definite duty, not for the purpose of obtaining a right to certain objects, not according to a previously established and legally fixed quotas: it is labour performed without expectation of reward, without reward as a condition, labour performed because it has become a habit to work for the common good, and because of a conscious realisation (that has become a habit) of the necessity of working for the common good*" – labour as the requirement of a healthy organism" (CW, Vol 30, p517)

This year's Summer Offensive has illustrated just how far we have travelled as a political tendency and to what extent we have broken with the degenerate traditions bequeathed to us from the communist movement in Britain. The Fifth Summer Offensive felt like genuine *communist* work.

The comrades who fought for the success of our Fifth Summer Offensive will recognise the parallel between revolutionary Russia's subbotniks and the way our organisation works. Our militants cut down on food and drink, raided their bank accounts and sold possessions. Some gave up smoking. Others worked overtime, took second jobs or set up small collective enterprises.

In our conditions these are the "*shoots of communism*". The work that comrades performed was communist labour because as individuals they did not gain from it. It was labour performed in effect gratis. It was labour for the benefit of our organisation, labour performed "*not for the purpose of obtaining a right to certain objects*". It was "*labour performed without expectation of reward, without reward*" because of a conscious realisation of the necessity of working for the common good.

Such an approach, such revolutionary self sacrifice and zeal stands in stark contrast to the degenerate milieu that goes under the heading of 'official' communism. In the CPGB enthusiastic activists were quickly disillusioned by the frustrating attempts to badger and cajole members to do anything, even turn up to a meeting. To be an average member of the CPGB today means to be inactive, it demands no financial commitment. Discipline is solely concerned with dealing with ideological dissidents. Democratic centralism has long ago degenerated into bureaucratic centralism.

And in the leadership of the CPGB an open and ugly cynicism reigns. Its not 'what I can do for my party' but 'what my party can do for me'. The most despicable example of this is the charmless Doug 'Chalmers of the Yard', a 'full timer' who without the slightest hint of embarrassment went into print affirming that the first concern of the CPGB's apparatchiks in Scotland was to raise enough dosh to pay *full timers* wages. Thus while our organisation's internal culture mobilises, activates and inspires the CPGB crushes and demoralises even those who sincerely believe in its dull reformist panaceas for moribund capitalism.

Purge

The word 'purge' has become a discredited one in our world communist movement. This is in no small part due to the crimes perpetrated by opportunists under the cloak of 'purging' the party. A purge, however, is healthy and necessary in the building of communist organisation. A purge leaves the organisation stronger and fitter. *The Leninist* is therefore all in favour of purges.

Again, there is a parallel between Lenin's analysis of the subbotniks and *The Leninist's* Summer Offensive: the communist subbotnik he wrote must be utilised to *purge* the Party. "*The cowards and scoundrels fled from the Party's ranks. Good riddance! Such a reduction in the Party's membership means an enormous increase in its strength and weight. We must continue the purge, and that new beginning, the 'communist subbotnik' must be utilised for this purpose*". (CW, Vol 29, p432)

Our annual Summer Offensive has always acted as a purge of our organisation in much the same way, flushing out all that is soft or decaying in our ranks. This year has been no exception. But, in contrast to previous year's campaigns, we have purged not *individuals*, but rather scored "*a victory over our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism*". The comrades who have backed away from full commitment to the Summer Offensive have been a section of the

sympathisers around the organisation – not as in earlier years, people *in* our group. On the other hand, far more sympathisers and supporters have participated fully or substantially than in any other year.

Thus we have purged "*conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism*" in ourselves. Those supporters who held back from the campaign, some of these comrades have had their trepidations overcome by partial participation or observation of the confident and dynamic way that other comrades have gone about raising their totals. In short, as evidenced by the Summer Offensive this year, our organisation is a far more tempered and mature fighting machine than in previous years.

Positive

The basic features of this year's Offensive are overwhelmingly positive:

- The annual campaign has become an *organic* part of our political practice. In previous years, given the small numbers involved and the fact the Summer Offensive was a relatively new 'grafting' onto *The Leninist's* body politic, drawn from the experience of our comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey who run a similar campaign every year, the Offensive did not not really 'click', they did not show their full potential.

- We originally took the decision to raise the of self sacrifice of members and involve more supporters and sympathisers in finance raising through a Summer Offensive at the Second Conference of Leninist supporters in August 1984. Our organisation recognised that we had to *institutionalise* fund raising given the tasks that were now facing us.

- The Summer Offensive was therefore 'grafted' onto our organisation in order to both *formalise* and *generalise* sacrifice and commitment. This year, the 'grafting' has definitely started to 'take'. Like Lenin's Bolsheviks, the hard, genuinely *communist* work which comprises the Summer Offensive has become a habit with us.

- Characteristic of this year's drive has been the fact that not only have more people than ever before been directly involved, but also that we have managed to turn the organisation outwards to a far greater extent. On average, the breakdown of participants' totals is 40% from personal 'belt-tightening' and the remaining 60% from outside sources. Thus the Summer Offensive both *reflects* the growing influence of *The Leninist* and also *promotes* the spreading of the influence of the paper, in much the same way as the subbotniks in the early days of the Soviet Union inspired and drew in many hundreds of thousands of non-Party workers. The fact that the Offensive has started to develop real roots and traditions as a organisational/political feature of our work was underlined this year by the fact that we have even started to receive donations from revolutionaries in other countries, including Irish POWs who have donated works of art to our fund drive.

- As in other years, the campaign has acted as a purge on our organisation. But pleasingly, the purge has not meant the departure of any of our comrades, but rather has flushed out bad attitudes and backward ideas.

The overall effect has been to firm up members along with a number of supporters and sympathisers of our group. All comrades, whether they participated fully or not in the Fifth Summer Offensive should be intensely proud of our organisation's achievement. But we must all also be aware that with a little more of a tough approach, with our sympathisers overcoming their misgivings, we could be raising in the region of £30,000 *now*. And that tougher approach is what we are determined take in the coming period.

Criticism of our comrades, of those comrades who have held back this year from throwing themselves wholeheartedly in the Offensive, plays a very important part in beefing up our organisation. Thus, when we quote Lenin against petty bourgeois egoism, or individualism, the comrades these words are directed against should respond as *communists*, not *prima donnas*.

Communists are made, and crucially, *remade* in the course of struggle, in the constant fight against the pressures of bourgeois society. Thus, the triumph of our Fifth Summer Offensive is a brilliant example not only of hard money raising, but also of the approach that will forge a genuine Communist Party in Britain.

Victory to *The Leninist*!

Forward to the Sixth Leninist Summer Offensive!

Ian Mahoney



The squalid death of municipal socialism

The difference between revolutionaries and reformists can be summarised thus: while we see the capitalist state as the problem, they see it as the solution. Our view has been dramatically vindicated by the crisis of left Labour rule in the London borough of Brent



Lobbying Brent's Labour council

"Yuppie yobs who go on drunken rampages are to get a Tory-style short, sharp shock. The violent loadsamoney boozers will be locked up for one or two days and then tried in special courts." That little snippet is from a national daily. The Sun? No, the Morning Star of August 9, actually. By their 'parliamentary correspondent', no less. So the Star is backing the build up of the scum in blue's powers. No doubt we can look forward to it cheerleading the filth's offensive against the black community under the guise of dealing with 'yardie drug dealers'.

It seems, though, that the Star is intent on departing the workers' movement and setting itself up as an alternative Church Times. With great gusto, it has entered the debate on women clergy in the C of E. Brimming with quotes from the 'good book', they plump firmly for frocking women. We are pleased that the Star and its CPB writers have constituted themselves the left advisors for religious bigots. Now all they ought to do is follow the Lords' commandment about not lying and drop the pretence of being 'communists'.

A recent edition of the Irish republican movement's paper, An Phoblacht, reported that the IRA's bringing down of a British Army helicopter with a high velocity machine gun has got their pilots so rattled that they are all now flying either above 5,000 feet, or below 500. One pilot, trying the latter approach, was so preoccupied keeping his eyes open for the IRA that he neglected the landscape and flew into a hill.

"A kind of perestroika?" asks the Soviet-sycophantic New Worker of August 19 about the reforms of Dubcek and the 'Prague Spring'. For it and the NCP the answer must be 'no'. Why this should be so, it really doesn't come to grips with. It just wasn't like perestroika, that's all. For the NCP, reality, it seems, falls before the weight of Czech cheques (Ever wonder how such a pitifully undynamic sect can stretch to a weekly paper?). If they really were honest, they would be working out who could possibly send in the tanks to do a Brezhnev on Gorbachev.

IF THE capitalist media did not have Brent council, they would almost certainly have to invent it. The cuts by the Brent council 'socialists' have been used to discredit socialism in general, to reinforce the idea that there is no alternative to the approach of the Tories and that the working class must simply grit their teeth and suffer.

In fact, what we are seeing in Brent is not the failure of 'socialism', but the collapse of the 'municipal socialism' ie the reformist nostrums and reactionary illusions of the Labour left.

Labour won a majority on Brent council in 1986 on a platform of opposition to cuts in services and jobs. All prospective Labour candidates had been selected by the constituency Labour Party branches on a ticket of 'no cuts in jobs or services' to the point of individual surcharging and disqualification if necessary.

However, once in office the 'practicalities' of administering a local wing of the capitalist state machine had to be faced. As the gulf between the manifesto and the demands of capitalist economics began to widen, the council plumped to stay within the law and started to attack the services and living standards of the working class in the borough in exactly the same way as any Tory administration would.

A programme of cuts to the value of £17 millions, thousands of job losses and massive rent increases — a huge attack on the local working class — was initially proposed by the council leaders. Since then the council has retreated — but only in order to buy itself time and to head off protests.

Workers, both council and from the wider community, have shown that they have the spirit to resist. The Nalco anti-cuts strike on August 17 secured an 80% turnout. Large numbers have turned out on

lobbies and there is a general desire to fight back. What is needed is a strategy which can take on the council and win.

First we have to be clear about what is actually going on in the borough. Brent workers are involved in a toe-to-toe fight with bosses, not a friendly difference of opinion amongst 'comrades' or 'fellow socialists'. For too long militants have seen the council as theirs. The council was seen as the body that would fight racism and sexism in the workforce. Indeed the white collar unions fell hook, line and sinker for the council's supposedly radical, but in reality totally reactionary, policy on racism and sexism. Many leftists therefore lined up with the council against the NUT when it struck in support of McGoldrick, the non-racist headmistress who had been suspended by the council for 'racism'. Support for such actions by the unions — in particular Nalco — has only succeeded in setting men against women, blacks against whites and in general creating a climate of fear and mistrust among workers. For the council such divides allow it to rule. The poisonous consequences of collaboration with the council now stands exposed but there still needs to be a decisive break with its politics.

The Nalco branch executive has adopted a fighting posture, at least ostensibly. But its leadership — mainly Labour lefts and the SWP — have in practice refused to come to terms with the fact that the council is no different in essence from any other employer. Their strategy has been one of pressuring the council and backing those who refuse to vote through the cuts.

Thus, Brent Nalco, whose members will suffer the brunt of the attacks, has failed to put forward a package of fighting measures to take on the council as bosses. Instead, they have concentrated on

lobbying various policy group meetings and on a few token one day strikes aimed at 'changing the council's mind'.

This approach is manifestly hopeless. So by default, the leadership of the anti-cuts dispute has devolved to the SWP who have demanded "all out action". However, this group, given its defeatist 'downturn' perspective, has only adopted this 'tough' stance for effect. It is directed upwards to the Nalco NEC not downwards to the workforce. As the national leadership have predictably refused to initiate any such action the SWP is off the hook. It keeps its left credentials intact and is able to blame someone else for not leading. This is what is called passing the buck.

Such a cowardly refusal to lead and never-to-be calls for 'all out action' demoralises militants in the union rather than mobilises them. We reject such an approach. The will to fight is there. It must be organised.

• The most pressing organisational task is the creation of an alternative centre to the venal national trade union leadership. We need a Council of Action. A rank and file joint shop stewards/activists action council, a body that organises workers inter-union and Brent-wide.

• A Council of Action must include not only representatives of council workers. Unemployed groups, working class women's organisations, representatives from the ethnic minority groups in the borough — in fact all working class organisations must be won to join forces by sending elected but recallable delegates.

• A priority must be to send speakers out to council workers in other London boroughs. It is vital that the battle does not remain isolated in Brent.

But the key to winning is obviously political, not merely organisational. What is needed first of all are the communist politics which show workers that their jobs and wages should never depend on the bosses' books. This goes for all bosses; profit-squeezed or rate-capped. We also need the communist politics that provides a real fighting strategy that goes way beyond the 'someone else should call all out action' of the SWP. What is needed is real action, not hot air.

Every effort must be made to mobilise the mass of the Brent population against the council. Given the service nature of much of the work carried out by Brent council employees strike action should be in selected areas.

Essential services maintained yes ... but under workers' control. If

union big wigs or council management try and prevent this we should exercise one particular aspect of 'workers' control' that the working class in Turkey include in their armoury and that even some British nurses in their recent dispute used: we should arrest the bastards, put them in a broom cupboard, until they comply with our demands. The same goes for Labour councillors that come to badger and lecture us about how they have to be responsible. We are only interested in those who are responsible to the working class. Not those who kick workers in the teeth.

Running essential services under workers' control will create a good basis for turning sympathy into action. Militants must do all in their power to involve the population. Neighbourhood meetings should be organised and committees elected. Imaginative means can be used to this end.

Teams of workers should be sent door to door to explain the consequences of the cuts. Council facilities can be used to produce a stream of propaganda, including a regular campaigning paper to coordinate the fightback, as well as leaflets and street meetings. These cuts are going to affect hundreds of thousands of workers so we need to develop lines of mass communication and propaganda of our own. During the miners' Great Strike, The Leninist had contact with miners who were running their own pirate radio stations to counter the bosses lies and organise their forces. This is precisely the sort of dynamic, imaginative approach we need in Brent.

Through such methods the working class of Brent can be won and organised for action. The fight can become truly mass. Brent will be in open rebellion not only against the council but, through spreading action to other councils, against the government.

Clearly, a Council of Action, uniting council workers with the working class community whose services are being destroyed by the Brent council is the way forward. Such a body will not come about by itself it will emerge through struggle. Above all it will emerge through actively involving the majority of the council workers now.

They must not be taken out on strike and then left stuck in their front rooms prey to the propaganda from the media and the pressures of personal life which can always act to corrode working class solidarity. This can only happen if the ground is laid now. What is needed then is regular workplace meetings, forms of action which educate not atomise.

As we have argued, simply leaving the struggle as a Brent council workers' one will spell defeat at the end of the day. We are facing an onslaught from the bosses as a class: we must learn to unite our forces and fight back as a class. In disputes like Brent, therefore, we should not go into battle with a narrow focus. We are struggling to raise our class to the level of the ruling class in society, not simply fight this or that industrial dispute.

If we can organise our forces correctly, involve the mass of working people in the struggle, we can not only shake the bosses in Brent, but also strike an important blow for all workers in Britain. The battle of Brent is only just beginning.

Brent Nalco Leninist Supporters



From a spark ... ?

Irish Republican Socialist Party, *Starry Plough*, No.3, pp12, 40p.
League of Communist Republicans, *Congress '86*, No.4, pp20, 50p.

THE PARTY. This has become the central question today for the left of the Irish republican movement and groups from that milieu. Fears at the Sinn Féin/SDLP talks are adding greater urgency to this in the eyes of many.

The call for a vanguard workers' party has already come from the League of Communist Republicans (a group of ex-IRA Volunteers formed in Long Kesh, plus supporters) and the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Needless to say, the forging of a vanguard party takes much more than a call for one and the substitution of the red flag for the green. A genuine Communist Party must be based on the most advanced theory and the energetic application of it to practice.

What is the contribution of these two groups to this? Let us look first at *Starry Plough*. Relative to other publications of the left in Ireland, it is a positive development. But a weak point of this issue is its failure to extend the analysis of Ireland as a medium developed capitalist country which it advanced in number two. This question needs more research, and the practical implications of such a position illustrated. That this has not been done here leaves this position and the IRSP open to accusations of being "evasive", as recently levelled by the Trotskyists of the Irish Workers Group.

More important than the snipings of this sect is the failure to make clear the logic of this position, or to misread the tasks which the nature of Ireland and its economy demand of communists there. This is a fault with the economics of *Congress '86*, which we have had cause to criticise in the past.

The latest *Congress '86* states that the single European market "means in effect ... that we surrender the right to deploy protective tariffs which safeguard our indigenous industry. More importantly we will be unable to safeguard the jobs of those employed in this industry. We will be surrendering the right to prevent the export of capital from this country." (*Congress '86*, p2).

The LCR may have broken from the republican movement, but it has manifestly not broken from its reformist economic platform. What is this 'we' that is referred to? What control do workers have of the economy? None. How can they have less control? Communists should argue that such devastation is inevitable under capitalism, that the only way out is for workers to smash the bourgeois state, trans-

form the economy, and fight for this worldwide. We want to shatter the chains of capital, not reform its operation.

The fight for a genuine Communist Party in Ireland is claimed to be the motivation of the two organisations. They have contradictory recipes for its realisation, though. The LCR argues that it is to be done through a second version of the Republican Congress of 1934. Rather than taking a (failed) Irish example, the IRSP claims the lessons of Lenin's struggle for a Communist Party through an *Iskra*, as their own.

In our view, following the example of the short lived Republican Congress can only lead to failure and demoralisation, especially since the comrades of the LCR have not undertaken the task of showing why the original floundered. It could only but do so in the absence of a genuine Communist Party at its head.

We must agree with comrade Francis Glenn of the IRSP, when he writes: "those involved in the Republican Congress had one thing in common, they failed to see the necessity of building a revolutionary party of the working class." Such a party, once firmly rooted, "may well fight alongside other anti-imperialist groups under a common banner, yet it will 'march separately' and retain its distinctive ideological clarity and line." (*Starry Plough*, p10).

Given this formally correct assessment by the IRSP, it is germane to ask how it sees itself going about this. IRSP political prisoner, comrade Pat McPhillips, addresses himself to this in a centre page article, 'Building the Vanguard Party' in *Starry Plough* No.3. In general, comrade McPhillips makes correct points. But this is the problem; he does not go from generalities to the concrete situation which the IRSP faces.

He also makes some elementary mistakes in his theoretical premise; eg, that the "fundamental contradiction of capitalism" is "that between capital and labour." It is not. As Marx made clear, it is between the social nature of production and the private nature of appropriation. It is this contradiction which heralds the death knell of capitalism. Also, the comrade's assertion that "pluralist democracy" is a "bourgeois concept" is both unproven and erroneous. Certainly, such democracy is a sham under capitalism, but what sort of democracy can be offered by a mono-party system even under socialism? Does its continuation advance the cause of communism in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries?

As an individual, given the comrade's situation, such errors and abstractions are understandable. But the comrade is not just an individual, he is a member of a party, the IRSP. When an individual comrade writes an important centre page the party has a duty to ensure that there is collective discussion on it before publication, or at least on an editorial board. If this has happened it certainly does not show.

Starry Plough devotes its back page to an article by comrade Robert Lake on the present situation in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, comrade Lake's article is strong on rhetoric but weak on analysis. Any view of the current events must surely start by informing the reader of the nature of the Soviet social formation. Comrade Lake does not.

The Soviet Union is inaccurately referred to as 'Russia'. Comrade Lake does not like *glasnost* and *perestroika* because it is bad news for the working class. We agree.

But so is Thatcher. The difference is that Thatcher heads a bourgeois government in a bourgeois state; Gorbachev is the leader of the Soviet workers' state. It is far from clear whether comrade Lake agrees.

The article's introduction makes it clear that he expresses his own opinion, not that of the party. Well and good; there is nothing wrong with this. But surely the party should now express its view. We would hope that it does so, in the process taking up the vagueries and errors of this article.

Starry Plough also carries two articles on Afghanistan and Cuba's role in Southern Africa by comrades Francis Glenn and Seamus Morgan respectively. We are in broad agreement with both. Indeed, comrade Glenn clearly draws heavily on the analysis put forward by the Communist Party of Turkey and *The Leninist*. In this light, we must ask how this internationalism is to be realised. A key test of the IRSP's break from left nationalism will be the nature of its relations with communists internationally. This is something the IRSP must address.

Since its inception, the IRSP and the Irish National Liberation Army have been plagued with internal differences which have often resulted in bloodshed. Comrades have turned to the Armalite rather than the pen to 'solve' internal problems. There is the possibility that this mentality is beginning to change. This is all to the good. And, for all our criticisms it must be said that *Starry Plough* stands head and shoulders above the rest of the left in Ireland. Of course, being the best does not lead to the formation of the genuine Communist Party Ireland needs but it does hold out the best bet. If it is to overcome the scepticism with which it is still viewed, and work towards the formation of a genuine Communist Party, much more decisive action is demanded - both in theory and practice.

Congress '86 carries an article on South Africa. Its approach here conflicts with its analysis of the political forces in Ireland. For instance, elsewhere in the paper, the petty bourgeois nationalist Sinn Féin is virtually written off. But in this article, the United Democratic Front of South Africa, dominated by bourgeois nationalism, is lauded to the skies: "the UDF is not based on any section or party of the bourgeoisie, but on a section of the most advanced class conscious workers."

Many militant workers in South Africa identify with the UDF. But what of its dominant figures? Whose class interests does the Rev Alan Boesak represent if not those of the black bourgeoisie? What is the class nature of the UDF's programme? The author clearly believes that to inform us that it has "a programme for the most diverse cultural and economic groups" suffices. It does not; indeed it contradicts the claim that the UDF is based on "the most advanced class conscious workers".

The SACP receives similar impressionistic treatment: "To explain the role the party has played in the struggle, it is only necessary to sketch a short personal history of its current chairperson Dan Tloome." We are thus offered a 'mini-biog'. But what does this tell us about the SACP? Very little, in truth. This is no substitute for an analysis of the SACP's programme and practice, a task that our comrade Jack Conrad undertook in a supplement in *The Leninist* No.25.

But a critical evaluation of the SACP provides rich lessons, not least for comrades in Ireland. *Con-*

gress '86 rebukes an "attempt to undermine the League of Communist Republicans in Long Kesh, by alleging that Tommy McKearney called 'for an end to IRA violence'. This was a grave misinterpretation of Tommy McKearney and indeed of *Congress '86* ... What Tommy McKearney, and indeed *Congress '86* is arguing for is the primacy of politics over the gun." (p2).

Yet, although refuting this assertion, the LCR seems only to offer confusion in its place. They are issuing "neither a call to arms nor a denial that they may be necessary." (p9). Indeed: "While we would not oppose a well argued case for a ceasefire, we believe that slogans which are really a cover for tying the hands of the oppressed with a 'constitutionalism' only philosophy, must be consistently and vigorously opposed." (p14, our emphasis).

One *Congress '86* writer warns against "those, especially outsiders, who encourage the conduct of the present republican campaign. Those who seem to argue that apart from the lack of socialist/communist leadership, the present struggle is essentially on course. This is dangerous and deceptive nonsense! ... Physical force adherents must learn to walk a hard road. One which demands the accumulation of popular support before insurrection is even thought of." (p9).

This smacks of national narrowness. Communists operating in different countries are not 'outsiders'. The comrades, part of the same proletarian army. It is possible that the 'outsiders' the writer wants to protect his/her compatriots from might include *The Leninist*. The issue raised against the LCR and others in the pages of this paper has been one of the validity of the guerilla tactic in the Six Counties under the existing revolutionary situation, not a claim that "the present struggle is essentially on course". Now here it is useful to look at the debate on the question of guerilla war that took place in the pre-Gorbachev SACP.

Comrade Mzala, in *African Communist* (No.102, 3rd quarter 1985), critiques a position of comrade Hugh Trevor's (*Ibid.* No.97), who advocates a position not dissimilar to that argued by the LCR, posing a 'people's war' against the existing guerilla struggle.

Comrade Mzala makes a clear distinction between an insurrectionary situation and a preceding period, where the guerilla tactic plays a role in the maturation of insurrectionary conditions: "Guerilla warfare and armed insurrection are two different tactics or stages in the development in the

struggle ... Clearly, at present we must concentrate our attention not on the organisation of insurrection but on the arming of the masses in actual combat and preparation for the inevitably coming armed insurrection." (*Ibid.*, 102, p70).

This was to be done, not by abandoning the guerilla tactic, but by generalising it; using MK cadres and units to train the masses. The guerilla army thus becomes the nucleus of the armed people. Guerilla operations here are not in contradiction to a 'people's war', but a vital prerequisite. In the preceding period, the guerilla tactic, though incapable of a military victory exists to harry the enemy; "to scatter his forces and wear him down." (Quadro Cabesa, *African Communist* No.104, p33).

We would argue that the problem with the republican leadership is not that they employ the guerilla tactic, but that they are incapable of employing it in such a manner. Unless this is perceived, there is a danger of throwing the revolutionary baby out with the nationalist bathwater. Such dangers exist within the politics of the LCR, whatever the comrades' intentions. For instance, its three proposals for the convening of a republican congress do not include the demand to oust the occupying army and unify the country. Why is it not in the LCR's demands? If it is an oversight, then it is an important one.

With all sincerity, we warn the comrades of the LCR that its politics contain similar misconceptions to those which turned the Communist Party of Ireland into the treacherous opportunist rump that it is today. Descriptions of CPI and Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association leader, Betty Sinclair, as a "defender of workers' rights" (p4) do nothing to allay these fears. She personified the opportunist degeneration of the CPI. The LCR does not bother to mention this. This speaks volumes about its political direction. Communists in Ireland must learn the lessons of the failure of the CPI and the Republican Congress, not repeat them.

The stated aims of both the LCR and IRSP are a step forward for Ireland. We have great hopes for the future of communism in Ireland. Even if neither organisation proves equal to its declared task (and we sincerely hope they do), the demand for a genuine Communist Party in Ireland has been forced to the top of the agenda by the objective circumstances, and by the actions and aspirations of those fighting for national liberation and socialism.

The revolution demands a Communist Party.

Alan Merrik

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Fighting with the UWC

WHEN THE Unemployed Workers Charter was launched in late 1986, it was greeted from certain quarters with howls of derision and condemnation. As the campaign has developed however, we have realised that those negative reactions were conditioned by the fear that some sections of the labour movement bureaucracy have of the unemployed section of the working class and the effect that the UWC's uncompromisingly militant message can have. In fact, we panicked some forces so much that they started scrabbling about for an alternative to pose to our campaign.

For example, the South East Region TUC Centres for the Unemployed Steering Committee met on November 31, 1986, and reassured itself that our campaign really was no threat and would soon collapse. Its minutes record:

"A discussion took place about the Charter and it was felt that the nature of much of its publicity would ensure it got little support from amongst unemployed people..." Despite this it was nevertheless recognised that we had effectively exposed the inaction of the official movement on unemployment. So in a shabby attempt to give the illusion of building a national unemployed movement, some bright spark suggested as an operative alternative to our hard campaigning work "a National Membership Card which could be issued by the local TUC Unemployed Workers Centre, but which would make you a member of the TUC national network of Centres".

The unemployed have been underwhelmed by these types of 'initiatives'. And far from the UWC collapsing it has been the 'national network of TUC Unemployed Workers Centres' which has bitten the dust, unnoticed and unmentioned. Neither the record of this body nor the prospect of a membership card proved sufficient to actually get anyone to lift a finger to prevent its extinction. The same goes for most of the TUC tea and sympathy centres. They were staffed by paid time servers, not fighters for the rights of the unemployed. Hence, when they faced the axe in nine cases out of ten only the time servers gave a damn.

The UWC's campaigning work has on the other hand found a real resonance among the unemployed. On the Jarrow '86 final demonstration UWC placards and slogans dominated. When the mealey mouthed liberals staged their Hand Across Britain charity stunt the UWC made sure the voice of the unemployed was heard. It intervened throughout London and staged its own reception committee for the Hands Across Britain tops when they went to visit Thatcher at Downing Street.

Above all though the UWC has sought to win the organised working class to face up to its responsibilities. As part of this the UWC has done its utmost to mobilise unemployed workers in

In the next edition we will carry a full report of the UWC lobby of the TUC. In the meantime we look at the need for the unemployed to be organised and the successes of the UWC so far

solidarity with those workers - like the CPSA dole office strikers last year - and confront the inaction and treachery of the TUC tops.

The UWC has taken the lead in calling for a mass lobby of this year's TUC Congress. It is fighting for more than just a boycott of the government's ETP/Workfare attack on the unemployed. It is fighting around its charter which among other things calls for work at trade union rates or full benefit, no slave labour schemes and above all the organisation of the unemployed.

The need for this is more pressing than ever. Unemployment has been reduced mainly through intimidation and the blatant fiddling of figures. Now with ETP/Workfare the unemployed face the most vicious onslaught since the 1930s.

The official labour movement, given its flabby traditions and the poisonous leadership it is currently saddled with, is remarkably slow to respond to attacks. Since the Tories came to power in 1979, they have ruthlessly moved to streamline a sluggish British capitalism. This has sent unemployment spiralling upwards.

Yet where have been the mass protest actions from the official labour movement? Where have been the 1980s equivalents of the Hunger Marches; where are the massive demonstrations in Hyde Park; or the protest strikes uniting the unemployed with the employed in the face of the Tory onslaught?

The leadership of our movement can hardly be excused because the issue is a 'minor' one. Unemployment, or the threat of it, still looms over every working class family in Britain today. And due to the collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy, there is a failure to appreciate the full scale of the recent round of Tory attacks.

In April, the government introduced a new means tested housing benefits system. Within days of the changes, cases were flooding in to MPs, welfare rights organisations and local authorities. Somewhere in the region of 5 million people lost out to these stinging cuts. ETP itself will incorporate all existing MSC adult training programmes and provide places for around 600,000 unemployed workers annually. Unemployed people over 18 will be dragged onto cheap labour schemes where they will be forced to work 40 hours a week for their dole plus £10.

With ETP/Workfare, there is a huge potential to forge a fighting unity between the employed and unemployed. Nothing though seems to be further from the minds

of the labour movement bureaucracy. Despite the blather of the likes of the *Morning Star* (August 22) about "outright opposition from the trade union movement" to ETP/Workfare, even the most 'hard' position adopted by the national unions amounts to nothing more than hypercritical paper opposition.

Nalگو is submitting a resolution to the TUC Congress that calls for a boycott of ETP/Workfare. The expulsion of the scab EETPU at the beginning of the proceedings is almost certain to tip the balance in favour of Nalگو's position. Yet the GMB has submitted a resolution that states that where opposition would endanger the jobs of union members involved in administering these schemes, the unions should cooperate with it. Nalگو will apparently find it extremely hard to reject this amendment, which in effect makes a nonsense of the supposed 'tough' stance of the resolution - as the actual wording is drawn from a circular it itself has already issued to its members!

To illustrate the reformist logic playing itself out here, let us invent an 'historical' analogy. The Amalgamated Union of Knout Welders and General Torturers, a trade union in ancient Rome - among whose membership were the slave drivers - is for the abolition of the degrading inhumanity of slavery; except of course, where this would lead to a threat on the jobs of its members.

So, the official position of the AUKWGT could be put in the following fashion: "Slavery is wrong, but we must protect the jobs of our members. We must not be utopian. Our members will do our best to improve the conditions of the slaves... blah, blah, blah."

This is an example of the sort of sectionalist approach that dominates the politics of the British labour movement. It effectively undermines any opposition to attacks like ETP/Workfare. Only by taking the interests of the working class as a whole can we really amount an effective challenge to the Tories and the boss class.

Although the official leaderships of the unions seem to be complacent about ETP, we have found in our campaigning work that there is a growing realisation of the scale of the onslaught among the rank and file and a willingness to start fighting back.

Branches of the CPSA have sponsored the UWC. One London branch passed a resolution which says that "It is clear that the interests of employed workers and the unemployed are the same, with a common enemy - the government and the bosses." In another

CPSA branch members sponsored a bike ride for the UWC's funds which raised over £400.

And the hard pressed Brent Nalگو branch have kept up their proud record of support for the work of the UWC. They have sponsored the lobby and circularised other Nalگو branches with our material plus a letter from Jim Roche, the branch secretary, urging that "a large turnout of employed will strengthen the demand of... Nalگو's conference (as well as Nupe and T&G) that the TUC should boycott the ETP." While a Nalگو branch in the North of England was so impressed with the UWC literature they received that they order 1,000 copies of *Unemployed Organiser* to distribute on a local march against 'Workfare'.

Veterans of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 30s have recognised that the UWC stands in the tradition of their mass, militant movement. Of course, Jack Dash, a NUWM man of the 1930s, is our honorary president; but also, Tom Evans one of the organisers of the South Wales Hunger Marches has come forward to offer his support, (see interview in the next issue of *Unemployed Organiser*).

The print run of *Unemployed Organiser* has now trebled to 15,000 - a tremendous achievement for the UWC.

The UWC is getting support from a variety of different political forces. Activists of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Movement worked for the lobby as did Red Action and the Workers Theatre Movement. With such support and the activity of supporters of *The Leninist* the UWC has been able to spread its support to Scotland and Wales.

The UWC is a campaign, not the National Union of Unemployed Workers the unemployed need. Nevertheless, through setting up local groups of the UWC the basis can be laid for such a national union. The UWC calls upon all organisations and individuals concerned with the rights of our class to join it in this fight to organise the unemployed and unite them with employed workers as an integral part of the trade union movement.

This is not only in the interests of the unemployed. It is also in the interests of the employed. According to the posters in dole offices, "Looking for a job should be a job in itself". Put less politely, this translates as "the unemployed must become a cheap labour force".

The Tories have attempted to restructure a stratum of the working class into a transient, 'cas-

ualised' labour force, without rights or organisation. This section can potentially be used as a bosses' wedge to depress the wages and conditions of all workers in a particular industry: the slave labour rates of the 'trainees' becomes the bench mark down to which all workers' rates are pushed.

Apart from the economic imperatives behind the government's ETP/Workfare there are solid political reasons. Clearly the ruling class have a rather better notion of the revolutionary potential of the unemployed working class than the so-called 'leaders' of our class. Michael Heseltine, not a particularly astute bourgeois politician but certainly one with a reasonably buoyant sense of self-preservation, recently warned that he saw the potential for the development of an "unemployment subculture in our society...". This has nothing to do with concern for what the unemployed watch or read. There is a danger, he says, that the long-term wageless are "vulnerable to those who say 'this is a rotten society which offers neither you nor your parents a fair deal. Why cling to its values? Join us on the streets!'" (*Guardian*, June 17, 1988). Precisely!

The UWC is in business to make the worst fears of the likes of Heseltine and the decadent class he speaks for come true. We say to the unemployed this is a rotten society. It has never offered anything to working class people apart from exploitation. Its values and morals sink. Join us, let's get organised and take the bastards on!

We aim to turn the plans of the bosses on their heads: to transform the unemployed from a potential bosses' wedge against working class living standards into a workers' wedge against the ruling class and its offensive.

We are fighting to spread the idea of organisation of the unemployed, united with their class brothers and sisters to fight for what we as workers need, not what the capitalists say they can 'afford' to give us. Their profits, the solvency of their system is their problem: our lives and families are ours.

•If you are in a trade union, get it to sponsor the UWC. Invite a speaker from the UWC.

•Put in a regular bulk order for *Unemployed Organiser* (Unwaged, 15p; Waged, £1. Bulk orders (over 5 copies), Speech. All prices include p&p).

•Whether you are employed or unemployed the UWC needs your help. Become a UWC supporter.

•The UWC holds a weekly organising meeting in Camden Unemployed Action Centre, 102 St Pancras Way, (entrance in Rochester Place), every Wednesday at 7.30pm

•The UWC is active on the streets every week. Get in contact for details of action in your area. Write to UWC, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: (01) 431 3135.

Ian Mahoney

Some questions of the day

Edited version of the speech given by comrade Jack Conrad on the occasion of the 68th founding of the CPGB and the end of 'The Leninist's' Fifth Summer Offensive

DEAR COMRADES, On the 68th anniversary of the founding of our party we triumphantly celebrate the end of our Fifth Summer Offensive. We will use this occasion to deal with a couple of important questions.

1. Socialism and its problems today

Comrades, if we look back 30 years or so there can be no doubt whatsoever that the idea of socialism, even its practice — with all its bureaucratic problems, deformations and drawbacks — was seen as being progressive, modern and full of possibilities. It was seen as the society of tomorrow. We are not talking only of communists here. No, even reformists had for some time looked upon the Soviet Union as the pointer to what was to come.

For example, in Britain the arch reformists, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, authored a joint work on the USSR, *Soviet communism — a new civilisation*. The Webbs were articulating the views of an important section of the ruling class in a whole range of different countries. This did not mean that the ranks of those who wished to see a revolution was suddenly swelled with recruits from the upper echelons of bourgeoisdom. No, far from it.

What was admired, what it was proposed to emulate, was not the October Revolution but the planning and the rate of growth that resulted. What many wanted to do was to graft on this aspect of Soviet life, so as to give bourgeois society a new lease of life. (This line of thought was particularly influential in the newly independent countries which emerged in the aftermath of World War II.) Such a course would not lead to the abolition of capitalism — in spite of claims to the contrary — rather a strengthening of its bureaucratic and technocratic wings. In other words, out would go the tarnished swash-buckling entrepreneur, the chaos of free competition and the quick buck exploitation of labour and in would come a minister of industry, state intervention and the scientific time and motion exploitation of labour.

How does this contrast with what we see now. We don't just have to pick up a copy of a Thatcherite journal like *The Economist* to be told that capitalism is now seen as what is go-ahead, while socialism and the plan produce inefficiency and stagnation.

A few days ago I was reading about a high level Chinese delegation visiting Hong Kong. The leader of the delegation was full of capital-

ism's praise. He told reporters that China had much to learn from capitalism, it was a revolutionary and dynamic system. Such talk is not confined to China. Not only has the Labour Party moved to embrace the Thatcherite love affair with the market, so have the leaders of a number of Eastern European socialist states, not least Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.

1.1. Capitalist road

Why should it be that the image of capitalism is riding so high? If we examine capitalism's record over the last two decades what do we see? Do we see capitalism experiencing a new golden age, has it been booming? Hardly. Compare the late 1960s with today. Then there was relatively full employment; now the levels of unemployment are similar to the depths of the 1930s. Growth rates are equally unimpressive. In the 1960s, Britain — the most sluggish of the major capitalist economies — grew far faster than it has grown in the 1980s. Amazingly, Britain — a country which has seen an actual decline in industrial production since 1979 — is presented as a model example of the 'miracle' that the market can perform ... some miracle ... some model.

Moreover, because of the massive imbalances in trade — for instance the over-exporting of Japan, Federal Germany and South Korea and the over-importing of the US and now Britain — the spectre of protectionism and trade war again haunts the world. And, as we all know, from trade war grows world war. This is one of the fundamental truths of Marxism. A truth that we Leninists will never forget, let alone deny as the majority of parties that make up the world communist movement now do. The fact of the matter is that capitalism through its crises of overproduction is a society which endangers the very existence of our species. Only by killing capital can we guarantee peace and the survival of humanity.

Even in the absence of open warfare capitalism is a society of poverty, ecological disaster and exploitation. Nowhere is this more so than in the so-called Third World. While for this part of the world the 1960s was a decade of hope, the 1980s has been a decade of despair. The dream of a green revolution has been replaced by the living nightmare of crippling debt — often with no hope of paying the interest, let alone the principal — and starvation. In fact, in a number of backward capitalist countries in the 1980s there has been

a process of absolute pauperisation taking place. It is not just that they are getting richer slower than the imperialist powers, more that they are actually getting poorer in real terms because of the usurious interest burden, because of the horrendously unequal terms of trade.

Is capitalism enjoying some new lease of life? No. In fact we can say that the left Cassandras who in the midst of the long boom kept their recruits on the boil by predicting that an economic crash was just around the corner have at last been proved right. Capitalism has become increasingly stagnant, moribund and decadent economic upturns are ever so fleeting, its downturns ever more deep and drawn out. So why, oh why, isn't everyone turning to socialism? And why, oh why, are the leaders of so many socialist states turning to mechanisms of capitalism? This is something all serious communists must do their best to answer. Those who deny the problem or close their eyes to it do a profound disservice to the cause of communism.

We don't think the answer is superficial. It is not to be found in an accident of history, that one leader died and was replaced by another. We say the masses make history, not so-called 'great men'. The answer does not lie in the psychology of leaders. Those who suggest such a thing are wedded to a general secretary's version of history, the 'official' communist version of kings and queens as the makers of events. For genuine communists this is idealist nonsense.

And surely the answer is not to be found in the record of those socialist countries which have gone the furthest down the capitalist road. The practice of market socialism in these countries is, as they say, nothing to write home about. What Gorbachev is saying is not new, nor is what will result from market socialism a mystery. We have the mess that is Poland, Hungary and, of course, Yugoslavia before us.

They are characterised by a growing class differentiation, uneven development and overall stagnation. Market socialism has not improved the living standards of the broad mass of the population. Only the petty and not so petty capitalists seem to have done well under these versions of market socialism.

So why when looking at practice of capitalism and market socialism are the likes of Gorbachev so enamoured by the market? The answer is to be found in the form in which socialism developed. The fact is that it has developed in the form of bureaucratic socialism.

1.2. Bureaucratic socialism

We have made our views clear on bureaucratic socialism in the past. In short we say that given the isolation of the revolution, its limitation within the borders of the old Tsarist empire, the growth of a bureaucracy was unavoidable. There would always have been a contradiction between the proletariat and its bureaucracy but in the concrete circumstances that have historically evolved, this contradiction has become antagonistic.

The bureaucracy was from the first a necessary evil, not a social layer that was desirable in itself. In the Soviet Union the proletariat was not able to act in the full sense of the word as a ruling class, it had to rule through the agency of a bureaucracy; a bureaucracy which, unlike the bureaucracy in the capitalist countries, has become socially distinct and alienated from those it was meant to serve. Running the state remained a sphere for experts not the masses. Saying this is simply stating what is true, something no genuine communist should fear to do. Of course, that doesn't mean that we say what exists in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe isn't socialism, that it is no different from capitalism or some sort of strange historical aberration.

Nonetheless there can be no question that the labour bureaucracy in these countries has come to see its interests as separate to the proletariat. Yes, it is a proletarian bureaucracy but its vision is limited and national. It does not fight for the victory of communism — which by definition is international — but the preservation of its bureaucratic privileges. What has made the contradiction between the working class and its bureaucracy antagonistic though is the fact that bureaucratic socialism has exhausted its possibilities. The bureaucratic form now stands as an absolute fetter on the further development of the productive forces and is becoming a force for capitalist restoration.

Obviously you can't put a precise date on when this happened, neither can we say that all socialist countries have reached this point, let alone simultaneously. Yet in broad terms it is clear that since the 1960s bureaucratic socialism has been experiencing ever greater difficulties in achieving sustained economic growth. This has all been well documented, as has the failure of counter measures.

The cause of this failure is to be found in the very nature of bureaucratic socialism itself. It is not due to the failure of this or that

individual. Bureaucratic socialism has not only become a block on what could be, but now represents a threat to what is. The bureaucracy has now become reactionary. It cannot administer the introduction of more socialism, it cannot develop the plan. Why? Because at this point in history to do so would require full unrestricted proletarian democracy and that would firstly undermine the social position of the bureaucracy, its parasitic existence, and secondly in time lead to its very extinction. No privileged stratum has yet given up its power and privileges voluntarily, let alone committed an act of social suicide.

The bureaucracy can close its eyes to the relative decline of the socialist world and the growing gulf that exists between reality and its promises of paradise. This only leads to cynicism and further decline. The only other answer the bureaucracy can come up with is the Gorbachev-type answer. That is a turn to the mechanisms of capitalism and the opening up to capitalist influences and imperialist exploitation in an attempt to shake out what is inefficient and overcome bureaucratic stupor. This is the only way the bureaucracy can now see to avoid being left far behind by the economies of the imperialist states in the vital fields of computers, micro-electronics and robotisation (ie what underpins the arms industry and will certainly form the basis for economic development into the 21st century).

There is nothing in principle wrong with integrating the socialist economy into the imperialist dominated world economy. The idea that socialism can advance in isolation is not a Leninist one. We favour the most rapid catching up of what were imperialism's weak links to what is most advanced in the world. This can provide a vital breathing space. But it must be done in the light of and in the interests of the world revolution. Sooner or later either capitalism or socialism will win. One or the other will be destroyed. Economic cooperation and integration, as with peaceful co-existence, must not be considered aims in themselves, but means to an end. If this is not the case, if the means themselves become the ends, what we have is not merely a failure to fight for what is necessary, but the endangering of the ends themselves.

It cannot be said that Gorbachev is guided by the long term aim of world revolution. His main concern is the preservation of the privileges and power of the governing stratum – the bureaucracy. This is what Gorbachevism represents, not a breathing space in order to strengthen the forces for world revolution.

There are a number of different ideas about what is going on in the Soviet Union on the left. It is suggested, for example, that Gorbachev is no different from Brezhnev. This is not true. There is a continuity but it is essential to grasp the fact that the Gorbachev line represents a qualitative development in the bureaucracy, namely its transformation into a technocracy and a strengthening of the forces of capitalist restorationism.

Many in the 'official' communist movement – like our Straight Leftists and NCPers – would like to believe that nothing qualitative is taking place in the Soviet Union, that all the talk of democracy, a second revolution, a political revolution without shots and all that is a sign of maturity; the inevitable outcome of the growing strength, world standing and power of the Soviet Union. This is wishful thinking. Gorbachev himself denies it. He says that the Soviet Union should have embarked on his course 20 years ago. He speaks of the Soviet Union being in a "pre-crisis situation". Given the fawning sycophancy of the centrists to Gorbachev's predecessors it is hardly surprising they have such problems today.

On the other hand we have no problem in stating our views on Gorbachev. He is a revisionist and a reactionary who stands at the head of a moribund bureaucratic stratum. What this poses for the working class in the Soviet Union is the historically necessary task of carrying out a political revolution. We are sure that the Soviet proletariat will in the near future come to stand independently from the bureaucracy and transform it from the master of society into its servant. This is the essence of a political revolution in the USSR. Only by taking this road can the Soviet Union advance. This is our considered opinion.

We are now in a period when both capitalism and bureaucratic socialism have reached the end of their road. The choice facing humanity is not bureaucratic socialism, or market socialism but war or communism. The fact that Gorbachev is advocating market socialism and deals with imperialism shows that the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is

taking a path which leads to war. Historical necessity demands a decisive change. We are indeed in a revolutionary epoch.

The fact that everything around us seems pregnant with crisis should not surprise anyone who consider themselves Marxists. The technological revolution in the forces of production can only proceed unfettered under advanced socialism where the plan and democracy have flowered. Capitalism and bureaucratic socialism stand in the way of the forward march of humanity. Everything is building up to a qualitative break with the past.

We communists must fully take on board the lessons of August 1914. When capitalism plunged into world war and general crisis, it took the official workers' movement with it. This was no accident. Likewise with Gorbachev revisionism and the disintegration of the 'official' communist parties in the west. Such developments are a direct product of the movement of history itself and the drift of capitalism towards a new general crisis. This is something we must fully grasp. The tasks of the future allow no illusions in Gorbachev and the 'official' communist movement.

1.3. What is needed

What I would like to do now is to turn to is what is needed in the socialist countries. Briefly, what social progress demands is the end of the one party state, the plurality of parties and a flowering of socialist democracy.

As we have stated many times before, socialist democracy is no luxury in the socialist countries: it is a burning necessity. History teaches us that the working class advances its interests through struggle. The working class in the socialist countries is no exception. Socialist democracy will not come via the bureaucracy; it will not come from above but below, and yes, through struggle. Only in this way can the bureaucracy be transformed from master into servant of society.

To carry through this struggle it is essential that the working class organises itself as a class for itself. In other words the working class needs to organise independently of all other classes and strata. In the long term this is impossible in a one party system.

We communists start from the principle that there should be a plurality of parties. Likewise we start from the principle that there should be no censorship, that ideas should be allowed to circulate freely. Without such conditions proletarian democracy cannot flourish. And if you prevent the non-proletarian classes finding political expression through their own parties, disallow the free flow of ideas, even with the most healthy and most vigilant leadership it is certain that they will worm their way into the communist party. This can only but strengthen the forces of opportunism that exist in a communist party even under socialism.

Now on hearing our call for the plurality of political parties and a political revolution in the Soviet Union, some people are shocked. We point out that Gorbachev himself calls his capitalist road a political revolution. He also talks about introducing what he calls "socialist pluralism". Of course, this is all bunk, as false as Neil Kinnock's claims to be a socialist. Nonetheless, all sorts of accusations have been thrown at us. Why should this be? Simple! It is instinctively recognised that we mean what we say and Gorbachev – like Kinnock and all opportunists – does not.

Let us first deal with our call for a political revolution. Some object to this call because they fear that a genuine political revolution in the Soviet Union will lead to internal disorder at least, chaos at worst. Under such conditions it is suggested that the imperialists would take advantage of the situation and launch a military adventure. In other words a real political revolution increases the danger of war. This is false logic.

The fact of the matter is that unless the Soviet Union has a political revolution, unless the bureaucratic fetter on the economy is removed, unless the bureaucratic strengthening of the forces of capitalism is scuppered, socialism will continue its relative decline and, in a world characterised by imperialism's drift towards a new general crisis, war will be inevitable.

We do not deny for one moment that a genuine political revolution will cause a certain amount of disruption – the extent of that disruption depends on the balance of forces between the working class and the bureaucracy and the degree of bureaucratic resistance – but it must be understood that the question of whether or not there should be a political

revolution in the Soviet Union is not an academic one. Life demands it.

If the working class in the USSR fails to carry out its historically necessary tasks then socialism will disintegrate and the danger of war will greatly increase. On the other hand, if it succeeds socialism will be immensely strengthened: the Soviet Union is after all the world's revolutionary centre. Not only will growth rates and economic efficiency take a qualitative leap forward but the moral standing of living socialism in the eyes of the world's working class – not least those in the imperialist countries – will be immeasurably improved. This will have a profound impact on the class struggle in the advanced capitalist countries.

A political revolution will by its very nature not only raise the banner of socialist democracy: it will also raise the banner of proletarian internationalism. Lenin's Soviet Union was made strong by the powerful combination of the Red Army and the love that the working class of every country had for the first land of socialism.

Its revolution stayed alive because it became to a large degree politically impossible to make war on it due to the work of such campaigns as Hands Off Russia! This is something Lenin fully understood. It was at the very heart of his world political outlook and understanding of the international significance of the October Revolution.

For all the claims to the contrary, Gorbachev's course does not offer safety. His appeasement of imperialism, his turn to 'market socialism' offers the safety of the grave. In contrast a political revolution – as with life itself – will carry certain dangers, true, but the promise of a bright future.

1.4. Socialist democracy

What about the argument against the plurality of parties? Our call for the plurality of parties in the USSR must be seen in the context of the struggle for a political revolution. In order for that to be successfully carried out it is vital that the working class be organised as a class for itself. In other words it is vital that the working class is organised by its communist vanguard party. Does the Communist Party of the Soviet Union play the role of a communist vanguard party in the USSR today? Frankly comrades, we must say that it does not. The working class in the Soviet Union will not be able to organise a political revolution through the existing CPSU. It is the bureaucratic party of the working class, not its communist vanguard.

There can be no doubt that there exist contradictions between the various classes that exist in the USSR, but also there can be no doubt there exist contradictions within the working class itself, not least between the working class as a whole and its bureaucracy.

The struggle to advance socialism along the road towards communism is bound up with and, at the present time, is dependent on the struggle for democracy. We can truly say that the struggle for communism is today the struggle for socialist democracy.

It is in the interests of the working class to allow the fullest and most open debate between different ideas and it is only natural that this should take the form of a struggle between parties. We are confident that genuine communist ideas will win the day. They are strong, they are true.

The bourgeoisie can be represented by more than one party because it has no historical mission. This is not the case with the working class: its aim is communism. To achieve this the working class must have its Communist Party. But the Communist Party does not achieve hegemony over the working class, lead it in the fight for communism through banning other trends and organisations in the working class.

The way to overcome backward ideas is not through banning them, driving them underground. Those who suggest this have no confidence in the working masses or communism. It is one thing to impose censorship in such emergency situations as civil war – this is perfectly correct – it is another to institutionalise such measures. No, the most effective way of overcoming such ideas is to force them into the open in order to subject them to polemic and other forms of political attack.

Now some say that it is okay to have more than one working class political party, but it's quite another thing to countenance the formation of non-working class political parties, like the Democratic Union. The fear is expressed

that if such parties were allowed to stand in elections they would actually win the day. Such a suggestion shows an extraordinary low estimation of the standing of socialism in the eyes of the people of the Soviet Union. It also exposes an understanding of democracy which is limited to the sham of western parliamentarianism.

The sort of democracy which we stand for, the sort of democracy that is most suited to socialism and the transition to communism, is the democracy that emerges from the highest level of the class struggle of the working class, ie revolution. This is not a Westminster style democracy where the adult population votes merely as atomised individuals, but a mass active form of democracy, ie a soviet democracy.

A soviet democracy is a democracy of producers, a dynamic form of democracy which reflects the fact that the majority of the population constitutes the ruling class. That is the democracy that is necessary if socialism is to further develop.

If we understand democracy as a class question then we will also understand that organisations such as the Democratic Union will find no place within soviet democracy. Not because it has been the subject of a ban, but precisely for the same reason that we don't find many representatives of the Tory Party on workers' strike committees.

Let us develop this point by examining two concrete examples of working class democracy. The first is not obvious, the second instantly springs to mind. My first example is the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5. My second is, of course, the period up to and immediately after the October Revolution.

The miners' Great Strike is of immense political significance for us in Britain and also for all of Western Europe. Very few if any other forces on the left in our country have any understanding of this whatsoever. The left in Britain suffers from a philistine lack of vision.

The class struggle has a dynamic. And what starts off as a strike committee can in the right conditions end up being an organ of working class struggle, not only challenging but taking state power. Those who do not understand that are trapped in a purely formal, hopelessly abstract understanding of the class struggle.

We do not merely look upon the miners' Great Strike as being great because it lasted a year. It was great because it contained within it the seeds of the future. Every working class action has within it what we could call the DNA of working class state power; every genuine working class organisation has the potential within it of transcending capitalism: organs of working class struggle are embryonic organs of working class state power. The more intense the class struggle, the more this potential takes concrete form.

There can be no doubt that the Miners' Support Committees and Groups had within them not only the possibility of becoming the 1980s version of the 1920s Councils of Action – which Lenin called embryonic soviets (ie embryonic organs of working class state power) – they were the 1980s equivalent. It is in this that lies the historic importance of the miners' Great Strike.

Many Miners' Support Committees went way beyond the 'money and baked beans' collecting centres first derided and then worshipped by the likes of the SWP. The role of the leading Miners' Support Committees went beyond narrow solidarity work and there was a growing recognition that what was necessary if the miners were to win was generalised strike action. And given the nature of the Miners' Support Committees, they were the natural organs of working class struggle to organise and coordinate such an action, not only at a local level but through the creation of a united delegate body at a national level.

So what was the democracy like on the Miners' Support Committees – the organs of working class struggle which in Britain are the nearest thing we have seen of socialist democracy? Well there were all sorts of different arrangements. Some consisted of merely those who bothered to turn up on the night. Some were dominated by stick-in-the-mud trades council functionaries. But in general what we saw were representative committees consisting of delegates from trade unions and working class political organisations.

How many members of the Liberal Party were members of Miners' Support Committees? Very few, I think we would all agree. How many members of the Social Democratic Party? Again very few. Did we see Tories and the like flocking into the Miners' Support Committees, our embryonic organs of working

class state power? Of course not. What about the National Front members? None that I know of.

Why did we see such 'purity'? Was it because non-working class organisations were banned? Hardly. There was no need to. The Miners' Support Committees were implicitly recognised as operating in the interests of the militant section of the working class.

Anti-socialists would hardly rally to organs of working class struggle which were engaged in a head on confrontation with the government. They wouldn't touch them with a barge pole. And the same would happen if the Miners' Support Committees had developed into organs of dual power or even organs of proletarian revolution.

The more important they became, the more they would have been feared and hated by anti-socialists. But also their democracy would have become more developed, fuller and eventually formalised in institutional form: to the extent that to have a vote one would have to be a recallable delegate. A recallable delegate from what? From the local Tory Party or SDP? No, the local trades council, trades unions, unemployed organisations or *working class* political organisations.

And if it was found that a delegate from a certain trade union branch turned out to be a member of the Tory Party or, say, the National Front, what would happen? This might come as a complete surprise. Presumably on the other hand an insistence this delegate was the one they wanted, a failure to replace them with someone sympathetic and in tune with the overall aims of the working class, would without doubt mean that such a union branch would find itself temporarily barred.

It is this sort of democracy that we see as laying the basis for the democracy of the socialist state in Britain and for that matter emerging in the existing socialist countries. Those who look at things undialectically, those who sit in the ivory towers of doctrinaire socialism with no understanding of the real class struggle will look upon real life as being too messy, as being impure. What they want is things fully developed from the word go. Something cut and dried with no rough corners. They approach the class struggle from the point of view of the academic not the revolutionary communist leader.

We who understand the class struggle understand that real life is always full of contradictions, short comings and ambiguities. But we also understand that the class struggle itself will provide the answers for the future better than any theoretician ever could. Hence when we are asked what proletarian democracy will be like we say look at the Miners Support Committees and, of course, our second example of working class democracy the soviets in 1917.

The Miners' Support Committees only had the potential to transform themselves from working class organs of struggle into working class organs of power. But in Russia the strike committees of early 1917 did go through this transformation. What did we see in the soviets that sprung up the length and breadth of Russia and in particular Petrograd?

How many delegates were elected to them from the Democratic Union of its day the Cadets – the equivalent of our Tory or Social and Liberal Democrats? I think we can agree that it was very few. Why? The soviets of workers', peasants' and army delegates did not emerge ready made, out of some constitutional lawyer's head. They came to life as an organised expression of the developing revolutionary struggle of Russia's workers, peasants and soldiers against such forces as the Cadets.

So who sat in the soviets? It was the representatives of the revolution. On its Central Executive Committee there were the Right and Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the United Social Democratic Internationalists, the Mensheviks and of course the Bolsheviks. And when the revolution was taken to its logical conclusion under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party in October, and the soviets became the power of the land, did this automatically produce a one party system? Even after the Constituent Assembly, Russia's House of Commons, was abolished did it become a principle that there should only be one party? No it did not.

The reason that other parties were banned was because they sided – in one way or another – with the forces of counterrevolution during the civil war that followed on the heel of the revolution. Under conditions of civil war this is more than understandable. It was correct that such parties were suppressed. But

there is a big difference between banning opposition during a civil war and turning this emergency measure into some sort of principle.

1.5. Objections to socialist democracy

We look to the rebirth of the soviet democracy that briefly flowered in revolutionary Russia. A soviet democracy that this time round which will become fully institutionalised. This could well mean the emergence of a number of socialist parties ie parties based on the proletarian and collective farm masses. It could also mean the emergence of a number of non-socialist parties.

That doesn't mean for a moment though that we stand for institutionalising non-socialist parties in the system of socialist democracy. The institutions of socialist democracy will emerge firstly as organs of struggle for the political revolution. Of this we can be sure. It is therefore a diversion to suggest – as do an odd assortment of centrists and Trotskyites – that Leninists are proposing some sort of bourgeois democracy in the USSR. Nothing could be further from the truth. We stand for the proletarian democracy that will usher in the communist world order.

The Soviet Union is now at a crossroads, that there is a choice between either the Gorbachev line and an increasing danger of capitalist restorationism or the struggle for political revolution and a genuine socialist democracy. Given the lag between reality and consciousness it is not surprising to us that we find around us certain readers of our paper and indeed certain leftist organisations ringing their hands about the danger that such manifestations of backward ideas in the USSR as the Democratic Union, Pamyat and the nationalist upsurges in the Baltic and Caucasian republics.

The general feeling seems to be that the best thing to do with such manifestations is to ban them. Such an approach reveals a deep conservatism, a lack of faith in the power and future of the proletarian struggle. These people do not believe that the working class can form itself into a class for itself and build a communist society.

History does not stand still. It cannot stand still. Hence if we examine the argument of our critics it is clear that life is leaving them far behind: such is the fate of conservatism. They say the Democratic Union should not be allowed – it is allowed. They say Pamyat should not be allowed – it is. Likewise the nationalist organisations. The task for communists is not to act like some King Canute ordering the tide of social development to stay still. As materialists our task is to harness social development not stand against it.

So when we look at current developments in the Soviet Union not least the emergence of political organisations outside the umbrella of the CPSU we do not and will not call for the return to the Brezhnev period however preferable this was compared with the danger to the very existence of socialism that Gorbachev represents. Communists seek the liberation of humanity by going forward, not in attempts to return to the past. The fact of the matter is that the reactionary organisations which are now operating openly existed while Brezhnev was general secretary of the CPSU, only under the surface. It is not our aim to drive them back underground – if that were possible – but to actually defeat them ... and that is best done in the open.

Our attitude to the reactionary unofficial organisations is in essence no different from our attitude to the Tory Party or the National Front. We aim to destroy such organisations by destroying the basis of their support. That will not be achieved if we centre our struggle on the demand that the state bans them. There is no way that in present conditions that the state would ever ban the Tory Party ... the National Front, though, is another matter.

It is quite possible for the bourgeois state to ban the National Front. There would need to be definite and yes, dramatic political developments for this to happen, but it is I'm sure we all agree not beyond the realms of possibility. If such a development were to occur it would not be greeted with joy and approbation by us. Let us be perfectly clear. We are not in favour of the bourgeois state banning the National Front. This is not because we are besotted with a liberalistic love of free speech but because we have no faith what so ever in the bourgeois state. Our aim is clear we aim to smash it, not

sow further illusions in it.

When the bourgeois state introduced restrictions on the activities of Mosley and his British Union of Fascists in the 1930s the left saw this as a victory. It was not. The sword struck two ways. Legislation which was supposed to have been directed against the blackshirts was turned on the left and the Communist Party. Likewise the use of the public order act to ban National Front marches – which was actually campaigned for by a broad spectrum of the left – is used today to ban anti-fascist, pro-Irish and other progressive demonstrations.

The fact that the left in Britain has actually agitated for the state to deal with the National Front rather than looking to its own devices and mobilising the strength of the working class means that the left has proved itself incapable of fighting for socialism, which requires the overthrow of the bourgeois state. In other words the left has played directly into the hands of the state. It handed the state a weapon which has been used against it.

We would urge the same approach to the problem of Pamyat. If Gorbachev banned it the legislation would be drafted in such a way as to allow a 'broad interpretation' which could with ease be turned against independent working class activity. That is something we can guarantee. The call for Gorbachev to ban Pamyat is to sow illusions in the bureaucracy, the illusion that the bureaucracy will carry out the task of fighting reactionaries, anti-semites and the poison that is Pamyat. Only the working class can do that.

Proof of the bureaucracies unwillingness and inability to deal with Pamyat is to be found in 7 Days, the paper of the 'left' Eurocommunists. Recently it carried a Monty Johnstone interview of Vadim Zagladin, the first deputy head of CPSU's international department (July 30 1988). Johnstone raised the question of Pamyat and seemed quite reassured by the answers provided ... we weren't.

This CPSU official admitted that there were some "bad elements" in Pamyat ... but he insisted there were also a lot of "good people". And in the leadership of Pamyat there were some "bad elements" and yes you've guessed it there are also "good people". The Soviet government will apparently not support the "bad elements". They are after all only going round "preserving monuments of old times and keeping alive national traditions" (like Jew baiting? – JC). Johnstone asked about Pamyat people circulating the so-called *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* which purports to expose a world wide Jewish/Masonic conspiracy to take over the world.

Zagladin told Johnstone that the Soviet press has carried a lot of articles reporting anti-semitic outburst "two or three cases have been reported where Pamyat members have been punished for anti-semitic graffiti and desecration of graves". There is no way that this represents a serious attempt to undermine support for Pamyat.

Indeed what the Zagladin interview exposes is the nonchalant, tolerant, indifferent attitude the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union takes to the rise of Pamyat. It also shows that the bureaucracy is incapable of undermining the social base Pamyat undoubtedly has.

Only with the triumph of communism is the material basis for backward and reactionary ideas removed. This is something the bureaucracy can only pay lip service to. Indeed the fact that it has now become an absolute fetter on the further development of society goes to show that it is part of the problem when it comes to anti-semitism and national chauvinism, it is certainly not the solution.

In broad terms and taking into account the different conditions prevailing in Britain and the USSR our attitude towards Pamyat is similar to the attitude we take to the National Front. Not as it is today, a bunch of lunk heads, but when it was a serious organisation winning 100,000 votes in London alone.

So how would Leninists fight Pamyat? If it marches how would we respond? We would not take the benign view of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union who allowed Pamyat to march through Red Square. We would agitate amongst the working class. We would tell the workers that these people are led by fascist scum, that Pamyat is a force for counterrevolution. We would mobilise the working class, we would build barricades and we would give the Pamyat marchers a beating they would never forget.

But we would not leave it there. It is necessary to take away the social base that Pamyat enjoys. This would not be done through finding out the addresses of Pamyat members

and kicking their heads in. Terror has its place but in the main we would seek out Pamyat members in order to argue with them. Many people who voted for the National Front in Britain did not understand its true nature, they were fooled. The same will be true of those who have joined Pamyat.

As an organised form we would fight fascism using whatever measures we have at our disposal, using whatever methods are necessary. We certainly do not look to Gorbachev to carry through such a campaign. Backward ideas are best fought out in the open and are best fought by a mobilised and self confident working class. Force has a role but the battle of ideas is the key. We understand that force only has a limited effectiveness.

Socialist democracy is not a system of paternalism. We don't aim to smash the sham of bourgeois democracy in order to further restrict the masses. Socialist democracy doesn't mean that workers can't publish this, can't read that. Communism is not built through a paternalistic elite. It is built through the active involvement of the overwhelming majority of the population. Communism – indeed the transition to it as Lenin made clear – means that every cook also governs. If you don't trust the cooks, if we don't allow them to form their own parties, how can they be expected to govern.

Communists trust the working class and the working people. This means that open debate is an integral part of day-to-day life. We do not consider the working class to be like a five year old child whose reading, listening and viewing has to be monitored in case it corrupts. We do not fear the open clash of ideas, the existence of non-working class parties. Nor do we fear the formation of rival socialist parties.

Our understanding of proletarian dictatorship is that it represents the continuation of the class struggle carried out under capitalism. It has a coercive side as well as a democratic side. But as socialism advances the coercive side is increasingly eclipsed by the democratic side. After all its essence is the active participation of the masses in the struggle for communism.

2. The left in Britain

I now want to turn to the state of the left in Britain. In broad terms I think we can say that it is characterized by retreat, confusion and a sense of impotence. This is a product of a host of different factors. Three in particular though can be singled out.

1. The crisis of Labourism. Because the left is a marginal force in British society (and always has been, even when the CPGB exercised almost total hegemony), most leftwingers and left groups have sought to overcome or at least compensate for their isolation by tying themselves to Labourism. Because of this, one way or another, they suffer as a result of the Labour Party's relegation from being the alternative party of government back to being a party of crisis – a role it performed between the years 1914-45. The tighter the bonds with Labourism, the more abject the retreat, the greater the sense of powerlessness.

2. There has been a period of relative stagnation in the class struggle since the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985. In some left groups this has produced a shift away from any attempt to conduct serious work in the working class movement and a retreat into student politics.

3. The left in Britain is congenitally weak ideologically. This is related to the fact that it is by and large tied to Labourism. But it affects even those groups which manage to maintain an existence outside the gravitational pull of Labourism. This makes the left very prone to schisms, eccentricity or downright charlatanism. Given the inability to chart a far sighted strategy and develop the appropriate tactics, we see miserable retreat into the arms of the cynical bourgeois 'art of the possible' and half-baked excuses for inaction on the one hand; and on the other the rhetoric of pretentious posturing and growing internal tensions. Of course, some groups show this or that feature more than others. Nonetheless there is a great deal of bravado and a lot more double-speak.

In general there is a process of disintegration on the left. This effects 'official' communism and the smaller Trotskyite entryist groups in a particularly acute form. Yet not only are larger left groups such as the SWP and Militant declining in terms of numbers but in terms of their political culture they have become just like 'official' communism in their unwillingness and inability to debate, let alone honestly admit,

problems. This is a dangerous and unhealthy trend in the left. And then we have the RCP. It markets its politics using the same methods as the sellers of washing powder. Everything it does is bigger, better, new and improved. Never has it suffered a set back — or so its leaders would have us believe.

Such organisations are pulling a con job. Not on us, comrades. But on their own membership. An example of this approach and what it can lead to is the WRP. All that remains today is the shattered remnants of what we were told only a few years ago was a steely body of "ten thousand fighters for Trotskyism". There were never "ten thousand fighters for Trotskyism". But the importance of the collapse of the WRP does not lie in the fact that it was able to launch a daily colour paper, numerous enterprises and a not so mini-bureaucracy of full timers through the most blatant and crude forms of political prostitution. No, what caused the WRP to explode was the huge gulf that opened up between theory and reality. When the miners' Great Strike came along this 'party' shattered under its own pretensions. Reality completely exposed them.

It would be a monstrous slander to paint the revolutionary left in Britain with the WRP brush. Yet we can detect a similar gap opening up between theory and reality in many groups. What we see are more and more examples of charlatanism. The inevitable resulting collapse might not be so total as the WRP, nonetheless this is the fate of those groups that attempt to grow through political dishonesty.

The real world involves retreats, all sorts of complications and contradictions. The task of a leadership is to develop the political strategy and tactics suited to the concrete situation. To do this effectively necessitates honesty. It does not mean conjuring up a revolutionary situation to keep the membership working at full stretch, magicking away the material basis of reformism, let alone abandoning the struggle for revolution for the cosy but suffocating life of the Labour Party committee room.

Let us briefly turn to the 'official' communist movement. It displays the features of crisis that beset the left in Britain in an acute form. True many of its problems stem from developments in the USSR and other socialist countries. The logic of Gorbachevism is after all liquidationist. Nevertheless, in terms of ideology it is clear that 'official' communism suffers from the 'English disease': ie, a lack of revolutionary theory. It is now a very *British* movement.

In the case of the Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*) this dislike of theory has been joined by a dislike of practice. One of our comrades quipped that news of the birth of the CPB is much exaggerated. This is, of course, an exaggeration. But it is not wide of the mark. The CPB was born, but it looks like it was a still birth. I think an autopsy is required.

The CPB is due to launch some sort of journal to coincide with this year's TUC. This shows its understanding of the working class movement. It is confined to its bureaucracy. Nevertheless, to date — four months after its formation — the only written evidence we have that the CPB has taken a breath is the document *Re-establishment Congress*. It is not dated but we believe it was published some time in July. This report of the CPB's founding congress is the only thing this so-called party has managed to publish.

To make the report on your founding congress your first publication as a party is perfectly legitimate. We have said that if this was a verbatim report, showing the cut and thrust of political debate, the search for solutions to the burning questions of the day, the personalities and the problems, then a such a lengthy period before publication would be understandable.

But what have they produced? A miserable little thing containing *excerpts* from the speeches of CPB leaders. Even then these speeches have been sanitised. For example the speech of Derek Robinson, the chairman of the CPB, has been cut so that all references to the New Communist Party have been removed, along with his call for it and the CPB to get together.

This caused considerable discussion. So why was it censored and for that matter why were the rebuttals of Robinson's unity call by CPB tops likewise treated? Why were differences over the women question not reported? Why were half the speeches from the floor completely absent? And why were those that were considered acceptable reproduced in a

column inch snippet? It was hardly time or pressure of work.

The CPB gives lethargy a good name. The CPB leaders promised their followers a 're-established Communist Party'. By their deeds do we know them. On May Day the CPB did not even have a banner on the London demonstration. It ventured out at last on the Anti-Apartheid Movement demonstration in July. But there were only about 20 people behind its two banners.

There is nothing wrong with only having 20 people on a contingent. If you've only got 20 people, mobilising 20 people is okay. Our organisation doesn't have huge contingents. We don't feel ashamed of that. The contingents we organise are militant, disciplined and effectively project our politics. We are proud of them. Leninists are also confident that one day we will stand at the head of millions.

But the CPB claims to have 1,570 members, with a high proportion of them in London. Where were the 1,570 members of the CPB on the AAM demonstration? Obviously the vast majority stayed at home. And where was the CPB's part-time general secretary, Mike Hicks, that day? At the head of his troops, leading, encouraging them? No he wasn't doing overtime. He was there. Not with the CPB though. He was acting as an AAM steward!

One can only wonder why they bothered to set up the CPB. It certainly wasn't to conduct communist politics. Perhaps it was to avoid arguments with Eurocommunists. Or is this being too generous? The CPB leadership seem intent on ensuring that there is no argument whatsoever in their 'party'. For them having a party is akin to a rest home. It certainly isn't about action. The CPB executive committee or whatever it calls itself has done nothing except pass resolutions such as its call for the TUC to expel the EETPU. What a brilliant example of tailism.

The CPB is effectively dead. In a corpse the hair and the nails keep growing for some time after death. That is all the CPB's 'activity' amounts to. Politically it is brain dead. Its heart isn't beating. The CPB advertises itself under the slogan that "Britain has a Communist Party again". Unfortunately, this is untrue. Britain is still awaiting its Communist Party.

3. Our organisation

What makes our organisation different from the groups of 'official' communism and the left in general is not our size. There are some groups that are a lot bigger and many that are smaller. What distinguishes us is our clarity and determination. We have a clear idea of what is going on in Britain and the world today. We have no need to seek sanctuary in fostering illusions in Labourism or in Gorbachevism.

That is why we have no interest in pulling the wool over our readers' and supporters' eyes, let alone our own eyes about the problems we have. With due consideration to matters of security, we aim to be as honest and open not only about how we see the world and what is needed but also about how we see our own organisation and its tasks. So let us turn to our most important problem.

Quite frankly, our biggest problem is a lack of cadres. We are in the business of making revolution and that requires training revolutionaries. It is no exaggeration to say that it takes five years to train any sort of rounded communist cadre. But our problem is not time. It is more a problem that in order to become a trained cadre one must have a highly developed sense of self sacrifice. What we suffer from is the problem of winning enough comrades to take the decisive step from theory to practice.

We do not for one moment consider the step from being a sympathiser to being an active partisan of *The Leninist* to be an easy one. More than that, it has to be recognised that the period we are living through makes it an even more difficult step. The left is disorientated, the 'official' world communist movement continues to move to the right and is experiencing a process of disintegration. And to make matters worse the class struggle is somewhat stagnant.

In the main under such conditions many who call themselves communists are seeking to cover their tracks, seeking excuses not answers. There are plenty of bolt holes; from the pedestrian such as the attempt to change the Labour Party into a vehicle for socialist

change or throwing oneself into the work of eminently respectable campaigns like CND and the AAM to the downright idiosyncratic attempt to maintain revolutionary honour by linking up with the rare manifestations of militancy in the 'official' world communist movement.

We have come across many such examples of such 'communists'. When we approach them with definite proposals for action they've got plenty of reasons for not doing anything. They are full of excuses, not revolutionary determination. This fully reflects the state of the left in Britain.

We can get a good idea of the psychology of the movement in Britain by comparing it to a country not so far away. It speaks the same language, its cars are like ours, right hand drive, its currency has the same denominations. But the revolutionaries in that country are not full of excuses, they are striving to find answers. I'm talking about Ireland.

It's not that Ireland itself has produced theoretical answers along the lines of Russia's Bolsheviks. More that answers are being sought and there is no dread of linking theory with practice. If anything, the Irish still proceed too quickly from the idea to the action — a point made by Connolly.

The British in general suffer from the opposite problem. This is not to say that Marxism has reached some sort of pinnacle in Britain. It hasn't. More that here the fear of following the logic of revolutionary theory into revolutionary practice leads to a watering down of revolutionary theory to the point that there is little to distinguish certain revolutionaries from the run-of-the-mill reformist.

This collapse is often covered with a philistine version of the theory of inevitability. The British revolution is inevitable — historically yes it is, as is socialism and communism — but 'inevitable' does not mean 'preordained'. But interpreting it that way fits in neatly with the prevailing mood in the workers' movement. That is why it is so often quoted.

The revolution is inevitable, but that does not mean it will happen by itself. It does not mean that we can sit and wait for the revolution to happen. The fact of the matter is that only through selfless activity, the development of Marxist theory, the active intervention in the class and above all the building of a powerful vanguard party is a successful revolution possible. Only through the actions of people does what is inevitable in social development actually come about. Revolutions are not independent of the will of human beings. They are not inevitable like the end of summer and the beginning of winter.

We must win an understanding in Britain that to call oneself a communist means to stand on a *definite* political position which is carried out in *practice* through selfless communist work. Communism is not about carrying a card, giving the occasional donation or turning up to one or two meetings.

To be a communist means to struggle for revolution with all the energy at ones' command. And, of course, the struggle for revolution does not begin just before the barricades are about to be built. The struggle for revolution is about the here and now as well as of the future. It is about producing and financing a revolutionary paper and building a revolutionary party. Without such a commitment in the here and now, talk about revolution is nothing but hot air.

We in *The Leninist* have achieved a clarity concerning the key questions that face the working class. We understand the significance and dangers of Gorbachevism. We place no faith in the Labour Party, nor do we seek to rescue it. We are not shocked or demoralised by the disintegration of 'official' communism. We have a grasp of the world revolutionary process, are confident about the future and know what is needed.

There are many around us who in all sincerity say they agree with our views. Yet when it comes to accepting our discipline, operating in an organised way, it is another matter. In all frankness, with all sincerity and respect to these comrades they do not agree with what we say. One of the fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism is the unity between theory and practice. Human activity is part of the inevitability of human progress. It is inconceivable without it. There is no such thing as a non-active communist, a communist who does their own thing. Those who are, do not agree with Marxism-Leninism.

Communists are part of the working class. To attempt to understand the mood of the working class does not lead us to accept it.

Communists are in unity with the working class but at the same time in conflict with it. To combine these opposites into a dialectical unity is done through practice. This is something that in the interests of the working class must be overcome.

The fact of the matter is that the working class needs its Communist Party. Not any old Communist Party, but a party that is worthy of the name. A genuine Communist Party. Without such a party leading the working class in the struggle for revolution nothing permanent can be gained. We are not talking about storming Buckingham Palace tomorrow morning. But we are talking about laying the basis for the reformed Communist Party that will decide whether Britain will have a successful revolution, whether the red flag will fly over Buckingham Palace. Without such a party the working class goes into the battle unarmed.

Communist politics are not a question of learning the general truths of Marxism, textbook style. Communist politics are not about giving ones' spare time. No, communist politics are about dedicating ones' life to the revolution. This dedication does not come from blind fanaticism. It is born from a deep understanding of the theory and politics of Marxism-Leninism. This is why we put such a stress on the education of comrades.

Imagine for one moment that our organisation had the same quality as it does today but was the size of the CPB. The political situation in Britain would be very, very different. The real question, however, is not to speculate about how different things would be, but to transform the existing situation. This means taking concrete measures to close the gap between what we are capable of doing and what the situation demands. To do this we must face the fact that who raises the vast bulk of the money to pay for *The Leninist*, who posts *The Leninist*, who folds *The Leninist* who sells *The Leninist* and who writes it consists of far too few comrades.

This leads to all sorts of amateurishness and all sorts of shortcomings. To overcome this, to fulfil our revolutionary tasks of the moment it is, of course, necessary to develop the quality of those comrades, but more crucially it is necessary that more comrades come forward to take on responsibilities under the discipline of our organisation.

For those who say they agree with the politics of *The Leninist* this is their duty. Practice is not an optional extra for Leninists. It flows directly from our theory and is organically linked to it. We are confident that many of those who at present limit themselves to expressing sympathy, turning up to this event or that action will respond to our call for them to come forward and join us. It is vital to at least double the number of comrades who accept the full discipline of our organisation within the year.

With such a quantitative development our organisation will experience a qualitative transformation. Certainly, if we look at what we have achieved with the comrades we have, it is obvious that our political impact will be transformed.

Conclusion

Comrades, it is indeed fitting that we celebrate the triumph of our Fifth Summer Offensive on the anniversary of the founding of our Communist Party of Great Britain. The formation of the CPGB was the greatest organisational achievement of the working class in this country. There can be no doubt that the militant, self sacrificing and revolutionary spirit which gave birth to our Party on July 31 1920, has not died. It lives in the form of *The Leninist* and its Summer Offensives.

It is true that the CPGB has been liquidated as a revolutionary organisation, and now even as a party, by opportunism. But we Leninists stand on the indelible founding principles of our Party, we hold aloft its bright red banner of revolution and proletarian internationalism. And yes, through the success of our struggle, genuine communists will recapture the proud name of our Party for Marxism-Leninism from the opportunists who illegitimately use its name. We Leninists will reforge the CPGB and open a new chapter for communism in Britain.

A mighty Communist Party will be built which will enable our working class to make a revolution in Britain and build the only future fitting to humanity, a communist future. Dedicating ourselves to this task is the Leninist way of saluting those who established the CPGB 68 years ago today.